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THE
DRAMATIC WORKS

OF
MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHOR OF
"OUR VILLAGE," "ATHERTON,"
&c &c

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
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1854.

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TO

FRANCIS BENNOCH, ESQ.

IN WHOSE LIFE

GREAT PUBLIC SERVICES BLEND SO HAPPILY WITH ALL THAT

IS GRACEFUL AND GENIAL IN PRIVATE HOSPITALITY:

WHO, MUNIFICENT PATRON OF POET AND OF PAINTER,

IS THE FIRST TO PROCLAIM EVERY TALENT EXCEPT HIS OWN:

TO HIM, VALUED ALIKE AS COMPANION AND AS FRIEND,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



Mr. Sturges's Cottage at Three Mile Cross.

L. D. H. R. A. S. P. R. T. 1844.

INTRODUCTION.

Ever since Pope's famous epistle, the "other" opinion among authors that they print at the request of friends," has been held to be a false and cowardly expedient, and scorned and ridiculed accordingly. Now, and then, however, that course in polite association appears to be true — in the present instance undoubtedly is so. For the collection of these volumes, the excellent friend to whom they are dedicated is solely accountable: a heavy weight of responsibility which he will redeem some day or another by going to the goodly hoards of his own library that nobody will wish to see.

Not so charmed upon these plays of mine, I know. I think he put them up in one corner of a great common house where he has nothing. They had better stay such utility collections.

INTRODUCTION.

EVER since Pope's famous couplet, the solemn protestations of authors that they print at the "request of friends," has been held to be a false and cowardly pretence, and scorned and derided accordingly. Now and then, however, that most improbable assertion happens to be true—in the present instance it undoubtedly is so. For the publication of these volumes, the excellent friend to whom they are inscribed is solely accountable: a heavy weight of responsibility which he will redeem, some day or other, by giving to the world lyrics of his own writing that nobody will wish shorter.

How he chanced upon these plays of mine, I hardly know. I think he picked them up in the library of a great country-house where he was visiting. They had fallen into such utter oblivion,

that I also might have forgotten them, but for an occasional dream, too vague to be called a hope, that in the brief moment of kindly indulgence, which follows the death of any one who has contributed, however slightly, to the public amusement, some friend might gather them together in the same spirit that prompts the stringing verses into an epitaph. To edit these tragedies myself, seems a kind of anachronism, not unlike engraving the inscription upon my own tombstone. I can only pray that my poor plays may be as mercifully dealt with as if they were indeed published by my executor, and the hand that wrote them were laid in peaceful rest, where the sun glances through the great elm-trees in the beautiful church-yard of Swallowfield.

And here I might well close my preliminary observations, were it not that all dramatists who have printed plays, from John Dryden to Victor Hugo, have delighted to take their ease in the permitted egotism of a rambling preface; and I have no mind to forfeit so pleasant a privilege, although my egotism may probably prove of a different sort. The Prefaces of the great Laureate indeed would be difficult to imitate, inasmuch as they contain some of the finest prose in the language. They consist, for the most part, of noble and generous criticism, strangely mingled with theories dear to the Merry Monarch, with vindications of the practice of interfusing

licentious farce amidst regal tragedy, and preference of the rhymes of Corneille to the blank verse of Shakespeare. That Dryden could have written Tragedy, is proved by the two striking scenes of quarrel and of reconciliation in "Don Sebastian" and "All for Love." The cause of his failure may be found in these theories. But theory, right or wrong, especially as applied to the work in hand, forms the ground-work of most dramatic Prefaces, largely blended with skilful specimens of the noble art of self-justification, with vehement attacks upon critics, and perpetual grumblings against managers and actors, and all that was done and all that was not done for the pieces that follow.

Now, although there be some dignity in having been ill-used—a dignity akin to that which made honest Dogberry proud of being "a man who had had losses," and I am not absolutely prepared to relinquish my claim to such a distinction—I yet hold it to be one which it is a point of discretion and of comfort to forget. The gentlest reader has small sympathy with such grievances; and in that want of sympathy does but follow one of those instincts which it is seldom wise to disobey. No one has a right to gratify a prickly, defiant and sensitive self-love by speaking unkindly of another, especially when the waves of thirty years have rolled between. So instead of reciting long categories of theatrical troubles, I shall endeavour to explain to myself and

to others, what has often caused me some astonishment, the causes that drove a shy and retired woman, whose days had passed chiefly in the calm seclusion of a country village into the ambitious and perilous paths of dramatic literature.

Where my passion for plays began, it is difficult to say. Perhaps at the little town of Alresford, when I was somewhat short of four years old, and was taken by my dear father to see one of the greatest tragedies of the world set forth in a barn. Even now I have a dim recollection of a glimmering row of candles dividing the end which was called the stage from the part which did duty as pit and boxes, of the black face and the spangled turban, of my wondering admiration, and the breathless interest of the rustic audience.

My dear father ! how, to the very last, he loved to take his pets to the play ! More than fifty years must have passed since that evening in the barn, when, happening to dine at Reading, attended by the beautiful little brown spaniel, who followed him everywhere, he, and of course Flush, accompanied his host to the theatre, to see the charming actress and charming woman, Mrs. Orger. They sate in the place of honour close to the stage. Flush, with his paws on the front of the box, his large earnest eyes fixed on the actors, and his long silky ears brought forward on either side of his face, as is the custom of those intelligent dogs on great occasions;

looked and listened all through the piece with a sedate fixity of attention, which greatly endangered the gravity of the persons on the stage. Mrs. Orger told me the next day that she had never in her life had so much difficulty in keeping her countenance. It is to be presumed that the little girl of four years old would have pretty much the same appreciation of "Othello" that the beautiful spaniel had of Sally Maggs, only with Flush the impression was solitary, and wore away; with me, repeated as often as opportunity offered, it deepened.

Sixty years ago, in the early times of the great war, the drama filled a very different place amongst the amusements of a country town from that which it holds now. Concerts were rare, lectures unknown, and the theatre patronised by the leading families, and conducted in the good town of Reading (to which we had removed) with undeviating propriety, formed the principal recreation of the place. The new comedies of those old times, the comedies of Holcroft and Morton, of Colman and Sheridan, followed by the farces of Foote and O'Keefe, and the musical entertainments of Dibdin, formed the staple of the house. I wonder whether anybody remembers, now-a-days, the pleasant extravagances of O'Keefe, who, soar to what comical absurdity he would, was sure to carry his audience with him; or the ease, the neatness, the racy humour of Foote's dialogue, equal, in point and finish, to the finest

scenes of Congreve! or his translations of Molière, almost as good as the originals themselves! Foote was one of those men whose great gifts as an actor and a mimic have injured his reputation as an author. The world is incredulous of versatility, and does not readily admit that anybody can excel in two ways. Because he acted his own parts with so much talent, the parts have died with him. They are well worth revising and reviving; above all, they are worth studying. Well! I did not look at them, I suppose, quite so critically then; but such were the performances which, varied by an occasional visit from a star, prepared my mind for the glories of the metropolitan boards.

It was during the five years from ten years old to fifteen, which I passed at a London school, that my passion for the acted drama received its full development. At this school (well known afterwards as the residence of poor Miss Landon), there chanced to be an old pupil of the establishment who, having lived, as the phrase goes, in several families of distinction, was at that time disengaged, and in search of a situation as governess. This lady was not only herself a poetess (I have two volumes of verse of her writing,) but she had a knack of making poetesses of her pupils. She had already educated Lady Caroline Ponsonby (the Lady Caroline Lamb, of Glenalvon celebrity), and was afterwards destined to give her first instruction to poor L. E. L., and her

last to Mrs. Fanny Kemble. She was, however, a clever woman, and my father eagerly engaged her to act by me as a sort of private tutor—a governess out of school-hours.

At the time when I was placed under her care, her whole heart was in the drama, especially as personified by John Kemble; and I am persuaded that she thought she could in no way so well perform her duty, as in taking me to Drury Lane whenever his name was in the bills.

It was a time of great actors. Jack Bannister and Jack Johnstone (they would not have known their own names if called John), Fawcett and Emery, Lewis and Munden, Mrs. Davenport, Miss Pope, and Mrs. Jordan, most exquisite of all, made comedy a bright and living art, an art as full as life itself of laughter and of tears; whilst the glorious family of Kemble satisfied alike the eye and the intellect, the fancy and the heart.

John Kemble was, however, certainly Miss Rowden's chief attraction to Drury Lane Theatre. She believed him—and of course her pupil shared in her faith—the greatest actor that ever had been, or that ever could be; greater than Garrick, greater than Kean. I am more catholic now; but I still hold all my admiration, except its exclusiveness.

If Foote's reputation have been injured, as I think it has, by his own double talent as an actor

and a mimic, so the fame of John Kemble—that perishable actor’s fame—has suffered not a little by the contact with his great sister. Besides her uncontested and incontestable power, Mrs. Siddons had one advantage not always allowed for—she was a woman. The actress must always be dearer than the actor; goes closer to the heart, draws tenderer tears. Then she came earlier, and took the first possession; and she lasted longer, charming all London by her reading, whilst he lay in a foreign grave. Add that the tragedy in which they were best remembered was one in which the heroine must always predominate, for Lady Macbeth is the moving spirit of the play. But take characters of more equality—Katharine and Wolsey, Hermione and Leontes, Coriolanus and Volumnia, Hamlet and the Queen—and surely John Kemble may hold his own. How often have I seen them in those plays! What would I give to see again those plays so acted!

Another and a very different test of John Kemble’s histrionic skill was the life and body which he put into the thin shadowy sketches of Kotzebue, then in his height of fashion. Mr. Canning, by the capital parodies of the “Anti-Jacobin,” demolished the sentimental comedy of the German school, a little unmercifully perhaps, for with much that was false and absurd, and the bald gibberish of the translator, for which the author is not answerable,

the situations were not only effective, but true. As Mr. Thackeray has somewhere observed, the human heart was there, and John Kemble contrived to show its innermost throbbings. In Penruddock (for "The Wheel of Fortune" is of German origin, although written by an Englishman), in Rolla, in the Abbé de l'Épée, three creations essentially various in form and in matter, nobody that has seen him can forget his grace, his pathos, or the manner in which he lent a poetry of feeling to the homeliest prose. In the old French philanthropist particularly, a part which is nothing, the smallness of the means, the absence of all apparent effort, produced that perfection of art which looks like simple nature. Such were my first impressions of London acting.

After my return home, came days of eager and solitary poring over the mighty treasures of the printed drama, that finest form of poetry which never can be lost. At school, I had been made acquainted, like other school-girls, with Racine. Little did Madame de Maintenon, proud queen of the left hand, think, when the gentle poet died of a courtly frown, that she and St. Cyr would be best remembered by *Athalie*! I had won, too, for myself the knowledge of bolder tragedies—of Cinna, of Horace, of the Cid, of Merope, of Mahomet, of *Zaïre*, and of the greatest Frenchman of his great age, the peerless Molière. Of Shakespeare I say nothing. I had grown up—it is the privilege of English people to

✓ grow up—in the worship of Shakespeare, and many of his favourite scenes I literally knew by heart. But whilst still almost a child, whilst thinking no evil, and therefore perhaps finding none, the Elizabethan poets, so nearly his contemporaries, had fallen in my way—poets second only to their great leader in tenderness, in sublimity, in all but purity.

Charles Lamb has given specimens of the early English Dramatists, containing as fine poetry as our language can show out of Shakespeare; and he and Hazlitt have rendered noble justice to Webster, to Marlowe, to Dekker, to Ford, to all who were previously little known; whilst Massinger, so admirable for character and construction, and Beaumont and Fletcher, so affluent, so eloquent, so royally grand in certain scenes, so touchingly pathetic in others, have, as it seems to me, something less than their due measure of praise. “Every child loves the violet of his own finding best.” It is true that these great poets had their full meed of applause whilst still alive to enjoy it, and that so late as Dryden’s day he had said that the English language attained its perfection in their verse; but in my time they had gone completely out of fashion; and I think that I was unconsciously swayed by the axiom which I have quoted, and a little over-rated the twin dramatists, because I fancied them under-rated by these eminent critics. It is certain that I, luxuriated in

their abundance, their profusion, the quantity of story and of incident which sometimes overlays their plots, but always keeps alive curiosity and interest; above all, in those whole scenes, sometimes whole acts, never whole plays, which might almost pass for Shakespeare. Fletcher was my second favourite amongst the old dramatists; but in plays, as in actors, I was catholic, and had love for them all.

Every third year, another noble form of tragedy, one with which women are seldom brought in contact, fell in my way. It happened that our family, although no longer living in a country town, kept up a close intimacy with that of the learned and excellent Master of Reading School, Dr. Valpy; who, having himself no small love for the stage, had wisely substituted the representation of one of the stern Greek Plays for the speeches and recitations formerly delivered before the Heads of certain Colleges of Oxford at their Triennial Visitations. Many of the old pupils will remember the effect of these performances, complete in scenery, dresses, and decorations, and remarkable for the effect produced, not only on the actors, but on an audience, of which a considerable portion was new alike to the language and the subject. It is no offence to impute such ignorance to the Mayor and Aldermen of that day, who, in their furred gowns, formed part of the official visitors, or to the mammas and sisters of the

performers, who might plead the privilege of sex for their want of learning.

For myself, as ignorant of Latin or of Greek as the smuggest alderman or slimmest damsel present, I had my own share in the pageant. In spite of all remonstrance and of all dissuasion, the dear Doctor would insist on my writing the authorised account of the play—the grand official critique which filled I know not how many columns of the “Reading Mercury,” and was sent east, west, north, and south, wherever mammas and grandmammas were found, and cherished and hoarded by them as certificates of the genius and learning of their offspring. Of course it was necessary to mention everybody, and to commit all the injustice which belongs to an enforced equality by praising some too little and some too much. The too little was more frequent than the too much; for the boys, as a body, did act marvellously, especially those who filled the female parts; making one understand how the ungentle sex might have rendered the Desdemonas and the Imogens in James’s day. So famous, indeed, were the Doctor’s boys for their women, that I never could prevail upon him to get up that masterpiece, “*Philoctetes*,” where pity and hatred are moved almost as strongly as in “*Lear*,” not on account of the obvious objection of the physical suffering, but because there was no lady in the play. One circumstance only, a little injured the perfect grouping of the scene. The Visitation



occurred in October, not long after the conclusion of the summer holidays; and between cricket and boating, and the impossibility of wearing gloves incident to boys of fifteen, our Helens and Antigones exhibited an assortment of sunburnt fists which might have become a tribe of Red Indians. That did a little spoil the picture. Sophocles, however, is Sophocles nevertheless; and seldom can his power have been more thoroughly felt than in these performances at Reading School.

The good Doctor, full of kindness, and far too learned for pedantry, rewarded my compliance with his wishes in the way I liked best, by helping me to enter into the spirit of the mighty masters who dealt forth these stern Tragedies of Destiny. He put into my hands le Père Brumoy's "*Théâtre des Grecs*," and other translations in homely French prose, where the form and letter were set forth, untroubled by vexatious attempts at English verse—grand outlines for imagination to colour and fill up. There are better things than the unities to be learnt of those old Athenian Poets, as Alfieri has shown, and would have shown better if he had imitated less.

In the meanwhile, frequent visits to London had made known to me the successive glories of the two great Theatres. I had seen the boyish grace of Master Betty, and all the charm of womanly tenderness in Miss O'Neill, and had watched the fiery impulse and

gushing pathos that had electrified the town in Edmund Kean. "The Honeymoon," most gracious and most graceful of modern comedies, had been acted as it never has been acted since by Elliston, and Miss Duncan, and little Collins; and Mr. Knowles had produced two vivid and original tragedies in "Virginius" and "William Tell." Everything tended to encourage a poetical aspirant.

About this time, too, my own prospects, so bright and sunny in early youth, became gradually overclouded. A Chancery suit, the gaining of which cost eight years and eleven thousand pounds, was the climax of our misfortunes. We were now so poor, that it became a duty to earn money if I could, and how I could, and so I determined to write a play.

In my very early girlhood, I had followed my destiny as a pupil of Miss Rowden, by committing the sin of rhyming. No less than three octavo volumes had I perpetrated in two years. They had all the faults incident to a young lady's verses, and one of them had been deservedly castigated by the "Quarterly."* Nevertheless, they had had their

* This article was fortunate for the writer at a far more important moment. Mr. Gifford himself, as I have been given to understand, feeling that, however well deserved the strictures might be, an attack by his great Review upon a young girl's first book, was something like breaking a butterfly upon the wheel, made amends by a criticism in a very

praisers—as what young ladies' verses have not!—Large impressions had gone rapidly off; one had run into a second edition; they had been republished in America—always so kind to me!—two or three of the shorter pieces had been thought good enough to be stolen; and Mr. Coleridge had prophesied of the larger ones, that the authoress of “Blanche” would write a tragedy. So I took heart of grace, and resolved to try a play.

My first attempt was a blank verse comedy on a pretty story, taken from a French *feuilleton*—a story so pretty, that it made the first manager, to whom, without any introduction, I ventured to send it, pause to consider; and after his final decision, tempted an amateur composer into requesting me to turn it into an opera; by which means I achieved a double rejection of the same piece. Then, nothing daunted, I tried Tragedy, and produced five acts on the story of “Fiesco,” which would doubtless have been rejected also had they ever fallen into the hands of a manager.

But just as, conscious of the feebleness of my attempts, of the smallness of my means, and the different spirit on the first series of “Our Village,” which was of much service to the work. I mention this, because it is honourable to the memory of one whom I never even saw, but who was probably, like many other people, kinder than he seemed.

greatness of my object, I was about to relinquish the pursuit in despair, I met with a critic so candid, a friend so kind, that, aided by his encouragement, all difficulties seemed to vanish. I speak of the author of "Ion," Mr. Justice Talfourd, then a very young man, although old in literary reputation, and helping me, as he has helped many a struggler since, by the most judicious advice and the heartiest sympathy. "Foscari" was the result of this encouragement—a womanish play, which acts better than it reads. Indeed, being at Oxford, where an excellent company was performing during the long vacation, I heard that it contained no fewer than four fair Camillas who had acted my heroine in different circuits. "Foscari" was quickly followed by "Julian," originally suggested by the first scene of the "Orestes" of Euripides, which happened to be given that year at Reading School.

Both these plays were accepted and produced at Covent Garden, although in an inverse order to that in which they were written; and but that I have promised myself and my readers not to enter into the vexed question of theatrical squabbles, a history of their adventures might be concocted quite as long as themselves. Suffice it to say, that poor "Foscari" had no less than five last scenes—I think I under-rate the number, and that there were seven!—and that the two plays fought each other on the point of precedence during the best part of the season—

which was pretty much like a duel between one's right hand and one's left.

Great, at the moment, were those anxieties and tribulations, the rather that money arrangements most important to those dearer to me than myself were staked on the issue. But it is good to observe in one's own mind, and good to tell to others who may be exposed to such trials, how inevitably, as according to some happy law of nature the keenest physical pain is known to be soon forgotten, whilst pleasure's light traces are indelible; so in mental vicissitudes, Time carries away the bitter and leaves the sweet. The vexations and the injuries fade into dim distance, and the kindness and the benefit shine vividly out. The warm grasp of Mrs. Charles Kemble's hand, for instance, when I saw her all life and heartiness at her house in Soho Square, my first dramatic experience :—the excellent acting of "Foscari;" Mr. Young, and Mr. Charles Kemble, so quiet and so touching in the concluding scenes; Mr. Warde playing a secondary part so finely, that he led every body into thinking that he ought to play the first; Mr. Serle lending to Cosmo his own fine taste; and Mrs. Sloman, who would have achieved the highest reputation but for the want of the indescribable thing called charm :—then "Julian," on the other hand; how Mr. Macready stood alone under the weight of that tragedy, with how much talent, how much warmth, what untiring and

indefatigable zeal ! These are the things one thinks of, when sitting calm and old by the light of a country fire ; and if other recollections mingle with them, they are rather of the comic and the grotesque kind than of the bitter or the resentful.

To one accustomed to the imposing aspect of a great theatre at night, blazing with light and beauty, no contrast can be greater than to enter the same theatre at noontide, leaving daylight behind you, and stumbling as best you may through dark passages, and amidst the inextricable labyrinth of scenery and lumber of every description ; too happy if you be not projected into the orchestra, or swallowed up by a trap-door.

Captain Forbes, one of the proprietors, and a naval man, used to compare the stage with its three tiers of under-ground store-rooms and magazines, and its prodigious height and complexity of top hamper aloft to a first-rate man-of-war. That comparison is rather too flattering. To me—no offence to the Theatre Royal Covent Garden—it always recalled the place where I first made acquaintance with the enchantment of the scene, by reminding me of some prodigious barn. A barn it certainly resembles, vast dusty, dusky and cavernous, with huge beams toppling overhead, holes yawning beneath, rough partitions sticking out on either side, and everywhere a certain vague sense of obscurity and confusion.

When the eye becomes accustomed to the dark-

ness, the contrasts are sufficiently amusing. Solemn tragedians—that is to say, tragedians who seem solemn enough in their stage gear at night—hatted and great-coated, skipping about, chatting and joking, and telling good stories like common mortals; indeed, the only very grave person whom I remarked was Mr. Liston; tragic heroines sauntering languidly through their parts in the closest of bonnets and thickest of shawls; untidy ballet-girls (there was a dance in “Foscari”) walking through their quadrille to the sound of a solitary fiddle, striking up as if of its own accord from amidst the tall stools and music-desks of the orchestra, and piercing one hardly knew how through the din that was going on incessantly.

Oh, that din! Voices from every part, above below, around, and in every key, bawling, shouting, screaming; heavy weights rolling here and falling there, bells ringing one could not tell why, and the ubiquitous call-boy everywhere! If one element prevailed amongst these conflicting noises, it was certainly the never-pausing strokes of the carpenter’s hammer, which in our case did double duty, the new scenery of the morrow being added to the old scenery of the night. Double, too, were the cares not merely of the official before-mentioned, the call-boy, but of his superiors, the stage-manager and the prompter; for whilst we, the new tragedy, held after our strange scrambling fashion possession of the stage, the

comedy or opera of the evening was crowded into the green-room, to the great increase of our confusion and their own; some of their people belonging to us, and some of ours to them, and neither party being ever in the proper place, so that there were perpetual sendings after their walking gentlemen and our walking ladies, the common property.

The scenery too, that part which was fished up from the subterraneous galleries, was fertile in blunders. I have known a fine view of the Rialto with a bit of Charing Cross for one wing, and a slice of the Forest of Ardennes for the other. Even the new scenes had their perils. Painter and manager would disagree as to the size of the moon, and a good half-hour was wasted one morning in experiments as to the best manner of folding the [muslin] clouds over the face of that bright luminary.

Then the turmoil about costume! A good deal of that squabbling was transacted in some remote part of the upper regions, where tailors and dress-makers held their court; but some of the difficulties descended upon the stage. There was a cloak in "Julian," which having to act as a pall to the fair Annabel, never could be made wide enough; and all the precedents of all the Duke's head-dresses in all the theatres of the world, from that in the "Merchant of Venice" to that in "Venice Preserved," never could persuade me that the tall inverted drum assumed by Mr. Young was the proper bonnet of the Doge. This,

however, was my own private grief. Through all their courtesy, I had early made the discovery, that the less an author meddled in such matters the better. One dispute was open and general: it had reference to the proper time of assuming mourning. Donato (we are still talking of "Foscari") died in the third act: the question was, whether his son and daughter should put on black in the fourth—that is, the next morning. Parties were divided: the anti-blacks holding that it is not customary to go into mourning before the funeral. The debate ended, as debates in higher places are apt to end in our good kingdom of England, in a compromise. The lady appeared in the deepest sables that the dress-maker could furnish; her brother retained the radiant suit of satin and embroidery which he had worn from the commencement of the play; a manner of settling the dispute which, like the aforesaid compromises in higher places, had the effect of making both parties seem wrong.

No end to the absurdities and discrepancies of a rehearsal! I contributed my full share to the amount, and began pretty early, so soon indeed as the very first words that I ever uttered behind the scenes. There is a gun in "Julian;" and I, frightened by one when a child, "hate a gun like a hurt wild-duck;" and the only time that I ever went to a review coaxed my father to drive me home before it began. I was only twelve years old then; but I had not much improved by

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becoming a tragic authoress, for my first address to Mr. Macready was an earnest entreaty that he would not suffer them to fire that gun at rehearsal. They did fire nevertheless; as indeed if the gun had not gone off in the morning, it might have been forgotten at night; but the smiling bow of the great tragedian had spared me the worst part of that sort of fright, the expectation.

Troubled and anxious though they were, those were pleasant days, guns and all; days of hope dashed with so much fear, of fear illumined with its fitful rays of hope. And those rehearsals, where for noise of every sort nobody can hear himself speak, where nobody is ever to be found where he is wanted, and nobody ever seems to know a syllable of his part; those rehearsals must have some good in them notwithstanding. In the midst of the crowd, the din, the jokes, and the confusion, the business must somehow have gone on; for at night the right scenes fall into the right places, the proper actors come at the proper times, speeches are spoken in due order, and, to the no small astonishment of the novice, who had given herself up for lost, the play succeeds.

Not that I had nerve enough to attend the first representation of my tragedies. I sate still and trembling in some quiet apartment near, twice I think in a small room belonging to that good-natured person Mr. George Robins; and thither some friend

flew to set my heart at ease. Generally the messenger of good tidings was poor Haydon, whose quick and ardent spirit lent him wings on such an occasion, and who had full sympathy with my love for a large canvas, however indifferently filled.

Before leaving "Foscari," it is well to say that two innovations began with my tragedies. The Epilogue by some accident arrived so late, that the lady by whom it was to be spoken complained that she had not time to study it. She probably made the most of the delay. No fair comedian can be supposed to find much pleasure in being dragged to the theatre for so ungrateful a purpose every tragedy night; so Mr. Fawcett, the stage-manager, a man, as his acting always evinced, of excellent judgment, proposed its omission. It was, he said, simply an added danger, could do no good in failure, and stopped the applause in success. So we discarded the Epilogue altogether; and afterwards, when bringing out "Rienzi," we also dropped the Prologue: in both cases, I believe, for the first time.

It was during the run of "Julian," that seeing much of my dear friend Miss Porden (afterwards married to Sir John Franklin), and talking with her of subjects for a fresh effort, one or the other, I hardly know which hit upon "Rienzi;" a personage at that time so little familiar to the public, that a great Law Dignitary asked gravely, after seeing the

play, whether such a man had ever existed? and another eminent person, gathering from my Preface that the story might be found in Gibbon, produced the *first* volume of "The Decline and Fall," actually the FIRST, which he told me he was about to take into the country, in order to compare my delineation with the actual man.

Miss Porden had herself written an heroic poem, called "Cœur de Lion," which, if anybody now-a-days could read an epic two volumes long, would be found remarkable as a promise; so she was far from being startled at my boldness, and took a vivid interest in my attempt. A year or two after, when in London, negotiating about this very play, I saw her again as Mrs. Franklin. Her husband was in Lincolnshire, taking leave of his relations before setting forth on one of his adventurous voyages; and, in the midst of her warm and undiminished sympathy with my anxieties, she talked of that husband whose projects of polar discovery had filled her imagination, showed me his bust and their little girl, and a flag which she was working for him as her own Berengaria had done for Richard. It was poetry in action—epic poetry—and I too sympathised with the devoted wife. But I saw, what at that time her own sister had not suspected, that she was dying. This warm-hearted and large-minded woman was of a frame and temperament the most

delicate and fragile. The agitation of parting was too much for her; and before Captain Franklin's expedition was out of the Channel, she was dead.

When "*Rienzi*," after a more than common portion of adventures and misadventures, did come out with a success rare in a woman's life, I missed the eager congratulations which I should have received from her who had taken so large a part in its previous history—missed her, the rather, perhaps, because no part of my success was more delightful than the pleasure which it excited amongst the most eminent of my female contemporaries. Maria Edgeworth, Joanna Baillie, Felicia Hemans (and to two of them I was at that time unknown), vied in the cordiality of their praises. In Mrs. Hemans, this warmth was peculiarly generous, for "*Julian*" and "*The Vespers of Palermo*" had been placed, by circumstances, in such a position as might have made us rivals if we had not determined to be friends. Kindness met me on every hand, from eminent men, from eminent women, still I missed her whose cheering prognostics had so often spurred me on, and whose latest interest in literature had been excited by this very play.

And dramatic success, after all, is not so delicious, so glorious, so complete a gratification as, in our secret longings, we all expect to find. It is not satisfactory. It does not fill the heart. It is an intoxication, followed like other intoxications, by

a dismal reaction. The enchanting hope is gone, and is ill-replaced by a temporary triumph—very temporary! Within four-and-twenty hours, I doubted if triumph there were, and more than doubted if it were deserved. It is ill success that leads to self-assertion. Never in my life was I so conscious of my dramatic short-comings as on that day of imputed exultation and vainglory.

Then came "Charles the First" and his calamities, of a very different sort from any of the former, since managers and actors were equally eager to bring out the play. The hindrance lay in Mr. George Colman, the licenser, who saw a danger to the State in permitting the trial of an English Monarch to be represented on the stage, especially a Monarch whose martyrdom was still observed in our churches. It was in vain that I urged that my play was ultra loyal; that having taken the very best moment of Charles's life and the very worst of Cromwell's; and having, moreover, succumbed to the temptation of producing, as far as in me lay, a strong dramatic contrast between the characters, I had, in point of fact, done considerable injustice to the greatest man of his age. Mr. Colman was inexorable; and the tragedy, forbidden at the two great houses, was afterwards produced at a minor theatre with no ill effect to the reigning dynasty. I have retained the original Preface, as giving a curious view of a state of things now happily passed away. Let me add

that as consolations are to be found for most evils, if we will but look for them, so pleasanter associations present themselves even here in the kindness of the Duke of Devonshire, of Mr. Serle, and very recently of Mr. Jerrold.

“Charles the First” had his calamities and “Inez de Castro” her’s, having been twice in rehearsal in different seasons, and twice, for different causes, withdrawn.

“Sadak and Kalasrade” was written to gratify a young musician, and “Gaston de Blondville” because I thought, and still think, that the story, taken from Mrs. Ratcliffe’s posthumous romance, would be very effective as mere spectacle—a play to look at—upon the stage.

I should not wish to say exactly the same of “Otto of Wittelsbach,” of which the name and a few of the events may be found in an old German play. It is just possible that hereafter some actor, powerful in mind and body, may think my drama worth trying. If so, I have to request that Ulric, (in whom there is, I fear, too strong a recollection of Fletcher’s Hengo) may be played by a boy. The young actors of Reading School proved that Greek women may be fitly represented by English lads; but I have never yet seen any actress who satisfied me in boys’ parts. They always exhibit a painful consciousness, never more unpleasantly visible than when disguised under the mask of levity, not to say

effrontery. Even Mrs. Charles Kemble, whose pantomime in "Aladdin" and in "Deaf and Dumb," was so perfect, seemed always (I speak it in her honour) a woman in boy's clothes.

So much for the Tragedies. There would have been many more such, but that the pressing necessity of earning money, and the uncertainties and delays of the drama at moments when delay or disappointment weighed upon me like a sin, made it a duty to turn away from the lofty steep of Tragic Poetry to the every-day path of Village Stories.

The Dramatic Scenes may almost be said to hold the middle road between these tracks so widely different. On their first appearance, they kept good company. Two or three of the earliest were inserted in "The London Magazine" at the same time with the "Essays of Elia," and the "Confessions of an Opium-eater;" the rest were written for various annuals in the palmy days of those pretty books;—by which I mean the days of Thomas Hood and of Winthrop Praed, of Mrs. Hemans and of L. E. L., when engravings were mingled with prose and verse, and neither verse nor prose was written to illustrate the pictures.

In some of these scenes, the descriptions introduced are taken from real places, and are as like to those places as my poor gift of word-painting could make them; and in all, I may say, or nearly all, I have, I cannot tell why, put more of my own pecu-

liar thoughts and fancies than in any other of my writings, which may be, perhaps, the reason why those who have happened to like them have liked them better than they deserve.

Before closing this Preface, I wish to caution the reader against attributing to me, personally, any participation in the sentiments respecting the Jews, expressed by the characters in "Gaston de Blondenville;" they are as purely dramatic as the belief in witchcraft, and intended, like that, to display the barbarism of a most barbarous age. Pierce, the jester, one of the few rational personages of the drama, says of them:—"For these poor Jews they are but as fear and misery have made them." And there I might, perhaps, safely have left the question; but that, besides my general hatred of persecution and intolerance, and all prejudices against caste and creed; I happen to have myself the happiness of knowing some individuals of that gifted Hebrew people, and if I were to write according to my knowledge, might very probably be accused of cherishing prejudices the contrary way; since I have rarely met any persons so eminent for high qualities, moral and intellectual, especially for the rare quality called charity.

This Introduction was written nearly a twelvemonth ago, when although suffering from great infirmity, I

was still lifted down stairs, and sometimes drawn through our green lanes. Brief and imperfect as these few pages are, I could not now even have attempted the task, for which I once again request the indulgence I have so often experienced.

SWALLOWFIELD,
JULY, 1854.

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RIENZI:

A TRAGEDY.

In Five Acts.

VOL. I.

B

THE materials of the following Tragedy are taken partly from the splendid narrative of Gibbon ; partly from the still more graphical and interesting account of Rienzi's eventful career, contained in the second volume of l'Abbé de Sade's " Mémoires pour servir à la Vie de Pétrarque ;" and I have followed these two authorities in giving to the great House of Orsini its more classical name. For the female characters I am wholly responsible.

CAST OF THE CHARACTERS,

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE,

OCTOBER 9, 1828.

<i>Cola di Rienzi, afterwards Tribune of the</i>	}	Mr. Young.
<i>People</i>		
<i>Stephen Colonna, a great Nobleman of Rome</i>		Mr. Younge.
<i>Angelo Colonna, his Son</i>		Mr. Cooper.
<i>Ursini, a great Nobleman, Rival to Colonna</i>		Mr. Mude.
<i>Savelli</i>	} <i>Lords of the Colonna Faction</i>	{ Mr. Aitken. Mr. Lee.
<i>Cafarello</i>		
<i>Frangipani, a Partisan of Ursini, also a</i>	}	Mr. Bland.
<i>Nobleman</i>		
<i>Alberti, Captain of the Guard</i>		Mr. Thompson.
<i>Paolo, a Roman Citizen</i>		Mr. Yarnold.
<i>Camillo, Rienzi's Servant</i>		Mr. C. Jones.
<i>Nuncio, Ambassador, Nobles, Citizens, Guards, &c.</i>		
<i>Lady Colonna, Stephen Colonna's Wife</i> ...		Mrs. Faucit.
<i>Claudia, Rienzi's Daughter</i>		Miss Phillips.
<i>Berta</i>	} <i>Claudia's Attendants</i>	{ Mrs. Geesin. Mrs. Webster. Miss Pincott.
<i>Teresa</i>		
<i>Rosa</i>		
<i>Ladies, Attendants, &c.</i>		

SCENE—Rome, in the Fourteenth Century.

RIENZI.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Rome, in the fourteenth century—A Street in Rome—A Temple in Ruins, in the background, a Portico with columns in front of it, so managed that a person may appear and disappear amongst the pillars and recesses.

Enter PAOLO, and three Citizens, meeting.

FIRST CIT. Ah, Messer Paolo, a good morrow to thee !
The streets are full to-day. I have not seen
Such an out-pouring of our Roman hive
Since the last jubilee. Whence comes the swarm ?

PAO. The stirring Ursini, on a hot canvass
For their proud chief, the factious Martin.

FIRST CIT. He,
Our senator ! a proper ruler ! sick, too,
And like to die !

SECOND CIT. Nay, he were harmless, then.

But 'tis his brother, John, of Ursini,
The subtle John, that drives this business onward.

FIRST CIT. A proper ruler! Martin Ursini,
That seized the Widow Landi's house, to make
A kennel for his hounds, that carried off
The pretty child, Emilia Fano, none
Hath e'er beheld her since.

SECOND CIT. 'Twas likelier John!
The dark, smooth, subtle John! He's the prime mover
Of these iniquities.

THIRD CIT. Ye have bold tongues.

FIRST CIT. Art thou of their black faction?

THIRD CIT. No; I ply
My trade, and hold my peace.

PAO. Stephen Colonna
Should have been senator.

FIRST CIT. No, he's too old:
The Count Savelli, or young Angelo.

SECOND CIT. 'Tis ill to choose between them.

THIRD CIT. Ay, and dangerous
To meddle with such great ones. Dost not see
A man in yonder porch. *[Looking toward the ruin.]*

*[RIENZI appears in the Temple, with a piece of decayed marble
in his hands.]*

PAO. Our honest neighbour,
Cola Rienzi, poring o'er some stone
With legend half defaced. Thou knowest Cola?

FIRST CIT. A follower of the Colonna?

PAO. Ay:
He haunts their palace, and, with rancorous hate,
Pursues the Ursini. Didst never hear
How his young brother, poor Antonio, fell,
Murdered by their base groom? He hates the Ursini;
And follows the Colonna: scarce for love,

Rather to feast his learned spleen, for Cola
Is a ripe scholar, with sharp-biting gibes
And dark predictions : a rank malcontent,
A bitter railer.

SECOND CIT. He approaches.

[RIENZI comes forward, with the piece of marble.

PAO. Cola,
What dragg'st thou there ? a stone ?

RIE. A mouldering stone !
An earth-encrusted stone !

PAO. A tombstone ?

RIE. Ay,
Fit emblem of our city. Here be words
An' ye could read them, words whose sense is dead
Even as the tongue. Did ye ever hear the sound
Of liberty, of country ? Back to earth,
Rebellious stone ! Back ! back ! thou preacheest treason !

[Throwing the stone up the Stage.

FIRST CIT. Treason to the Ursini ! What will thy patrons,
The proud Colonna, say to this new power ?

RIE. My patrons !—Oh, they'll fight ! they'll fight !—
They'll pour

Their men at arms into our streets, and wage
Fierce battle ; burn and plunder, spoil and slay,
Guilty or innocent, or friend or foe :
Their nature, sirs, their noble nature !

PAO. Well,
And we ? What is our fate, sir prophet ?

RIE. We !
Whichever wheel turn round, we shall be crushed
Between the millstones. That's our destiny,
The destiny we earn.

SECOND CIT. He's right. The barons
Make an arena of the city, vexing

Our quiet streets with brawls ; plundering and killing
The peaceful citizens. Even the Colonna,
Albeit Stephen be a thought more brave,
And Angelo more kind, even the Colonna
Are tyrants to the people.

THIRD CIT. Yet the yoke
Must be endured.

RIE. Must ! Be ye men ?

PAO. Why, Cola,
What should we do ?

RIE. Talk, talk, my masters ! Speech
Is your fit weapon. Talk ! Women and slaves
So drown the rattle of their chains. Talk ! talk !
And tell in gentle whispers, gazing round
Lest other listeners than the storied walls
Of these old temples hear ye, how on Monday
A noble gallant, one of the Corsi, stole,—
Seized is the courtlier phrase,—and wrung the neck
Of Adriani's falcon, a famed bird,
Unmatched in Italy, the poor old man
Weeps as it were his child ; or how, on Tuesday,
Black John, of Ursini, spurred his hot courser
Right through a band of pious pilgrims, journeying
To our Lady of Loretto, marry, two
Are lamed for life ! Or how, on Wednesday—

PAO. Stop—

RIE. I can go through the week.

PAO. But, for the pilgrims,
Art sure of that foul sacrilege ?

RIE. As sure
As that thou standest there ; as that the Ursini
Parade the city. [*Distant shouts.*] Hark ! do ye not hear
The shouting mob approach ?—Sure as that ye
Who frown, and lift your eyes, and shake your heads,

And look aghast at such foul sacrilege,
Will join your voice to that base cry, and shout
Long live the Ursini! I know ye, masters.

PAO. Cola, thou wrong'st us.

RIE. If I wrong ye—no!

Ye are Italians; men of womanish soul,
Faint, weak, emasculate: the generous wrath
Of the manly Roman, with his lofty tongue,
Lies buried—not for ever. [*Nearer shouts.*] Hark!
Here comes

The tyrant of to-day. Go, swell his train.
I'll to my porch again, and feed my spirit

On these mute marbles. [*Goes into the Temple.*]

SECOND CIT. A brave man.

THIRD CIT. Full surely,
A dangerous.

[*PAOLO and Citizens retire to the background in front of the Temple.*]

Enter Officer and six Halberdiers, who cross, and URSINI, FRANGIPANI, and two Lords, in conversation, followed by armed Attendants, and accompanied by a Crowd, who shout Live the Ursini, &c.

URS. [*To the Mob.*] Thanks, gentle friends. [*To the Lords.*] Yes, I expect to-morrow

A packet from Avignon; even Colonna
Will bow to Clement's mandate.

FRA. If he do not—

URS. Oh, never doubt! If he refuse, why, then—
Doubt him not, Frangipani. Quicker, friends!—
I hurry ye, my lords, but we are waited
At the Alberteschi Palace. Follow fast.

Crowd. [*Following.*] Live John of Ursini

[*Exeunt URSINI, &c.—PAOLO and the Three Citizens come forward, and are stopped by an armed Attendant—the Three Citizens, with their caps off—PAOLO, and the Attendant.*

ATT. Why, what a sort of sullen citizens
Be here, that shout not ! Doff thy bonnet, man !
Look at thy fellows ! doff thy cap.

PAO. Good friend—

ATT. What, must I be thy tireman ?

[*Knocks off PAOLO'S cap with his spear—RIENZI rushes out from the Temple, wrests the spear from the Attendant, and strikes him down with it. Exit the Third Citizen.*

RIE. Down, vile minion !

Hath the slave harmed thee, Paolo ?—Art thou hurt ?
Look where the abject tyrant licks the dust.
The very stones of Rome cast back the load
Of his foul carcass !—yet he stirs ! I'm glad
The reptile is not dead.

FIRST CIT. Fly, Cola !

RIE. Fly !

PAO. To the Colonna Palace,—they will shield thee
From danger or pursuit, This is no time
For thanks. Fly, Cola !

RIE. Let them fly that fear.

Fly ! why, the evil-doer flies, not he
That putteth down a wrong. Fly ! I would call
Rome, universal Rome, to view this deed,
The type of that to come. Yon creeping slave,
Struck with the strong brute force of power, unjust
Abused power, and like a bulrush fell
Before my weaker arm, nerved by the spirit
Of righteous indignation. So shall fall
Tyrants and tyranny. Meet me to-night
On the Capitoline Hill. Now I can trust ye,

Now that the man is roused within your souls,
The Roman ardour.

SECOND CIT. One is gone.

RIE. Well, well,

A milder breeze had severed such light chaff
From the sound corn. Yon slave—he lives, he stirs.

PAO. I'll take him to my house.

RIE. And I, to-morrow,
Will find a fitter hospital. Farewell!
Remember midnight,—at the Capitol!
Remember!

[*Exeunt RIENZI, PAOLO, and Citizens, bearing off the Attendant.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment in RIENZI'S House; a Roman chair, and one with a skein of red worsted; a Lattice down to the floor, opening into the Garden.

Enter ANGELO and CLAUDIA, through the Lattice.

CLA. Beseech thee, now, away, Lord Angelo,
Thou hast been here o'erlong.

ANG. Scarce whilst the sand
Ran through the tell-tale glass; scarce whilst the sun
Lengthened the shadow of the cedar.

CLA. See!
The sun is setting, see!

ANG. Scarce, whilst I said
A thousand times—I love.

CLA. Look to the sun.

ANG. I had rather gaze on thee.

CLA. And think how long
We sate beneath the myrtle shade, how long

Paced the cool trellis-walk. When next thou steal'st
Hither, from thy proud palace, I must time thee
By seconds, as the nice physician counts
The boundings of the fevered pulse. Away,
Dear Angelo; think, if my father find thee—

ANG. Oh, talk not of him, sweet! why was I born
The heir of the Colonna? why art thou
Rienzi's daughter? What a world of foes,
Stern scorn, and fiery pride, and cold contempt,
Are ranged betwixt us twain; yet Love, and Time—
Be faithful, mine own Claudia—Time, and Love!

CLA. Alas, alas!

ANG. Thy father loves thee, sweetest,
With a proud dotage, almost worshipping
The idol it hath framed. Thou fear'st not him?

CLA. Alas! I have learned to fear him; he is changed,
Grievously changed; still good and kind, and full
Of fond relentings—crossed by sudden gusts
Of wild and stormy passion. I have learned
A daughter's trembling love. Then, he's so silent,
He once so eloquent. Of old, each show,
Bridal, or joust, or pious pilgrimage,
Lived in his vivid speech. Oh! 'twas my joy,
In that bright glow of rapid words, to see
Clear pictures, as the slow procession coiled
Its glittering length, or stately tournament
Grew statelier, in his voice. Now he sits mute,
His serious eyes bent on the ground, each sense
Turned inward.

ANG. Somewhat chafes his ardent spirit.

CLA. And should I grieve him too? Lord Angelo,
The love deserves no blessing, that deceives
A father.

ANG. Mine own Claudia!

CLA. We must part.

ANG. Oh, never talk of parting! 'Twas Rienzi
That brought me hither first. Rememberest thou
A boy, scarce more than boy, thy lovely self
Scarce woman. Then was thy rare beauty stamped,
At once, within my heart,—then, and for ever.
Thou canst not bid me leave thee. Love and Time,
And Constancy—oh, be as faithful, Claudia,
As thou art fair!

RIE. [*Without.*] Camillo!

CLA. Hence, begone!

RIE. [*Without.*] Camillo!

CLA. 'Tis his voice—away, away!

[*Hurrying ANGELO off the Stage.*]

Here, through the lattice—by the garden-gate.

[*Exit ANGELO.*]

Now Heaven forgive me, if it be a sin
To love thee, Angelo. [*Looking after him.*] My foolish heart
Beats as it were. He's gone—he's hidden now
Behind the myrtle-hedge: thank Heaven! thank Heaven!
He's opening now the gate—I hear the key—
But my sense is fear-quicken'd: now 'tis closed,
And all is safe. [*Sinks down into the chair.*] Oh, simple
heart, be still,
Be still.

Enter RIENZI and CAMILLO.

RIE. Camillo, see that thou admit
Only Alberti.

CAM. None, save him?

RIE. None.—Claudia!

[*Exit CAMILLO.*]

Claudia, I say! She trembles at the sound
Of her own name, and flutters like a bird
Fresh caught, as I approach. It likes me ill

To scare thee thus, fair daughter. Time has been
When thou hast listened for me, when my voice,
Half a street off, my footstep on the causeway,
Would bring my little handmaid, springing forth
With eager service, to fling wide the door,
And seize my cloak. [CLAUDIA rises hastily to take his cloak.]

Nay, nay, I need thee not.

CLA. Oh, let me take it, father!

RIE. Sit thee down,

And ply thy sewing. [CLAUDIA sits, and takes up the skein of
ravelled worsted.] Hath Alberti—no—

The west is glowing still. Hark ye, fair mistress:
Crossing the hall but now, I saw a shadow
Upon the garden wall, as clearly traced,
By the sun's parting rays, as I see thee
Weaving fresh tangles in that ravelled skein,
Which thou affect'st to wind. He must have passed
By yonder open lattice. Art thou dumb?
Did thou not see him, Claudia? him whose shadow
Darkened the sunny wall?

CLA. Perchance, Camillo.

RIE. Camillo! old Camillo! when I told thee
I saw him plainly as thyself:—the form
Erect and stately; the proud head thrown back
Crested with waving plumes. Perchance, Camillo!
Claudia, with thine old Roman name, I gave thee
Precepts that might have made thee simply great,
As ever maiden of old Rome. Camillo!
Wouldst thou deceive thy father? Pay'st thou thus
His love, his trust, his doting pride?

CLA. [Rises.] Oh, no!

[Weeps.]

No, no! I'll tell thee all: forgive me, father,
Only forgive me!—thou shalt hear—

RIE. Not now,

Not now, my Claudia; cheer thee, sweet! I'll hear
Thy tale some fitter season. Wipe thine eyes.

[*Kisses her forehead.*]

If I've been harsh with thee, 'twas love, my Claudia,
Love of my fairest daughter, and vexed thoughts
Of this oppressèd city. Sit thee, sweet!
All is at peace between us: weep no more,
My Claudia.

CLA. This is joy.

RIE. I had been chafed

By one of yon base minions. But the hour
Of vengeance comes.

CLA. Of vengeance!

RIE. Say, of freedom:—
Dost tremble at the sound?

CLA. Oh, father, each
Alike is terrible; for each brings war,
Fierce, desperate war.

RIE. Claudia, in these bad days,
When man must tread perforce the flinty path | ✓
Of duty, hard and rugged, fail not thou
Duly at night and morning to give thanks
To the all-gracious power that smoothed the way
For woman's tenderer feet. She but looks on,
And waits and prays for the good cause, whilst man
Fights, struggles, triumphs, dies. Vex not thy mind
With thoughts of state, my dear one; there's no danger:
All whom thou lov'st are safe; all, silly trembler.
Peace, peace! I will not hear thee: all are safe.

Enter ALBERTI.

Alberti, welcome. [RIENZI and CLAUDIA rise.] Be the scrolls
affixed

On churches, at street-corners, in the markets

Art sure of the soldiers? Dost thou hold the watch?

Thine answer in a word.

ALB. In one word, yes.

All is prepared. I'm waited at the castle;

Yet hearken, Cola; I saw Count Savelli,

Colonna's kinsman, conning yon bold summons:

Thou hadst best avoid him.

, RIE. Nay, confront him, rather:

I'll to the palace, meet them, baffle them.

Hast heard aught of the Ursini?

ALB. They feast

High and elate within their halls.

RIE. Yon wretch

Was not even missed. Poor slave, he shall be cared for.

Now, for the last time—Simple child, in, in!

Lay all thy cares to rest. In, in, my child!

Bless thee, my Claudia! my fair Claudia! [*Puts her gently
off.*] Now

For Rome and Freedom.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Colonna Palace.

Enter COLONNA, CAFARELLO, LADY COLONNA and Nobles.

COL. What, Martin Ursini our senator!
An Ursini, and of that hated race
The most abhorred, the worst. He chief of Rome!
Sick, too. Tush! tush!

CAF. The tale is rife, Colonna;
And, as I passed his palace, glancing lights
And sudden shouts and merry music spake
The high and liberal feasting which foreruns
Expected triumph.

COL. Martin Ursini
Head of the state! and the Colonna fallen
Beneath their rival's feet! His wanton vassals,
The meanest horseboys of his train, will spurn
My belted knights. Cousin, we must away
To Palestrina, and array in force
Our men at arms: they will be needed.

LADY C. Fie!
These brawls match ill with thy white hairs.

COL. Good wife,
Wouldst have me turn a craven in mine age,
A by-word to mine enemies ?

LADY C. Art thou not
Stephen Colonna, of that greatest name
The greatest ? Which of these proud Ursini
May match with thee in fame ? But thy old wreaths
Were won in nobler fields. These private feuds
Are grown a crying evil.

Enter SAVELLI.

Count Savelli !

SAV. A fair good evening, noble dame. Colonna,
Hear'st thou the news ?

COL. Of Martin Ursini ?

SAV. Nay, that were common, stale, and trivial. See,
I bring ye tidings of rebellion, sirs ;
High tidings ! stirring tidings ! prompt rebellion !
Headed—I pr'ythee guess.

CAF. Rare food for mirth,
If we may judge by look and tone. The wives
Of Rome revolted ; or the husbands risen
Against their gentle dames.

SAV. 'Tis a brief summons,
Fiery, but scholarly, stern, bold, and plain,—
Calling the citizens to meet to-night
And win their freedom. Such a scroll as this
Is fixed in every street.

CAF. How signed ?

SAV. Guess, guess !
There lies the mirth : ye'll never guess—read here.

[Showing a scroll.]

CAF. What, Cola di Rienzi ! honest Cola,
Who saves Colonna here a jester's charge,

A fool without the bells. Honest Rienzi!

'Tis a device of the black Ursini.

COL. Likelier some freak of Cola's. He hath turned
A bitter knave of late, and lost his mirth,
And mutters riddling warnings and wild tales
Of the great days of heathen Rome; and prates
Of peace, and liberty, and equal law,
And mild philosophy, to us the knights
And warriors of this warlike age, who rule
By the bright law of arms. The fool's grown wise—
A grievous change.

LADY C. I ever thought him so:
A sad wise man, of daring eye, and free,
Yet mystic speech. When ye have laughed, I still
Have shuddered, for his darkling words oft fell
Like oracles, answering with dim response
To my unspoken thoughts, so that my spirit,
Albeit unused to womanish fear, hath quail'd
To hear his voice's deep vibration. Watch him!
Be sure, he is ambitious. Watch him, lords:
He hath o'erleapt the barrier, poverty;
Hath conquered his mean parentage; hath clomb
To decent station, to high lettered fame;
The pontiff's notary; the honoured friend
Of Petrarch. Watch him well.

COL. Tush! tush! Rienzi,
Cola Rienzi, honest Cola, rise
'Gainst us! Fair wife, I deemed thee wiser. They
Who plot are silent. Would we were as sure
Of Martin Ursini! What says Avignon?
The holy father hath not joined the faction?

Enter RIENZI, behind, unseen.

SAV. I know not; but the cardinals, his uncles,

Are powerful with Pope Clement.

COL. All the race,
Churchmen or laic, old or young, have craft
Veined in their stony hearts, the master-streak
Of that cold marble. Of the cardinals,
Gaëtano is a soldier-priest, but wary,
And politic as valiant; Annibal,
A meek soft-spoken monk, who, crawling, climbs
Ambition's loftiest ladder. Of the nephews—

RIE. [*Advancing.*] Despatch them at a stroke,—say
they're thy foes.

SAV. Why, Master Cola—

RIE. Say they are thy foes.

SAV. Art thou their friend? I have heard talk of wrongs
Thou hast suffered from the Ursini.

RIE. Ay, ay,
A trifle of a life, a foolish brother
Killed in a midnight brawl. Your privilege,
Your feudal privilege! ye slay our brethren,
And we—we kiss the sword. This Martin Ursini—

COL. What of the knavish ruffian?

RIE. Mend thy phrase—
Shall ne'er be senator,—yet mend thy phrase;
Bespeak him fair; ye may be friends.

COL. Friends?

RIE. Ay;
A day will come, when I shall see ye joined
In a close league.

COL. Joined! by what tie?

RIE. By hatred,
By danger, the two hands that tightest grasp
Each other, the two cords that soonest knit
A fast and stubborn tie: your true-love-knot
Is nothing to it. Faugh! the supple touch

Of plant interest, or the dust of time,
Or the pin-point of temper, loose, or rot,
Or snap love's silken band. Fear and old hate,
They are sure weavers, they work for the storm,
The whirlwind, and the rocking surge; their knot
Endures till death. Ye will be friends, I tell thee,
Ere yon inconstant moon hath waxed and waned,
Ye will be friends. Yet Martin Ursini
Shall ne'er be senator.

SAV. Why, master prophet,
Men say thou shalt be senator, or king,
Or emperor. Hast read the scroll? when goest thou
To head thy rebel band? See! see! [*Gives the scroll.*]

RIE. [*Reading.*] "*At midnight—*"
Well, I come here to while away the time
Till that dread hour—" *Upon the Capitol.*"—
Look that ye set forth scouts and men at arms
To seize the chiefs, and chase the multitude,
Like sheep before the dogs. Ye were best send
To man the castle walls, and triply guard—
Who is the captain of the watch?

SAV. Alberti.

RIE. Ha, mine old friend! I counsel ye, my lords.
Seize me, and crush this great rebellion; me,
Cola Rienzi, honest Cola! Laugh ye?
An honest man hath played the rogue, ere now—
Witness this scroll.

COL. A scurvy jest!

RIE. A jest!

Call it a jest, and 'tis a mockery
Of all that, in this worn-out world, survives
Of great and glorious, the eternal power
Lodged in the will of man, the hallowed names
Of freedom and of country!—If a truth—

LADY C. What, if a truth?

RIE. Then—Where is Angelo,
Thy goodly son, Madonna?

COL. Dost thou seek
A full-fledged gallant, and so gaily plumed,
Here, in his parent nest? If thou wouldst meet
The rover, go where mandolines are heard,
Beneath coy beauty's lattice. Count Savelli
Hath a fair daughter.

CAR. I have heard him praise
Bianca Ursini.

COL. An Ursini!

LADY C. Calm thee, Colonna. Rest thee sure thy son
Will never stain thy honour'd name—will never
Forget his proud obedience.

RIE. Say'st thou so?

LADY C. With a glad certainty.

RIE. Look to him, then;
Yet, watch him as ye may, against your will
He shall espouse the fairest maid in Rome;
The fairest and the greatest.

SAV. And as good
As she is great, and innocent as fair?

RIE. Even to the crowning of a poet's dream
Gentle, and beautiful, and good.—Yet, mark me—
Against thy will! I said against thy will!

[*Erit.*

LADY C. Hear'st thou? [*Calling after RIENZI.*] He's
gone!

SAV. Dear lady, think no more
Of this wild prophecy.

LADY C. Nay, I am sure
Of Angelo. Why dost thou seek thy sword?
Thou goest not forth so late, good husband?

COL. Yes:

The night is fair,—I shall take horse at once
For Palestrina; thence to Avignon.
We'll bide some struggle with these Ursini.
Will ye ride with me, kinsmen?

CAP. Joyfully.

LADY C. I'll wait ye to the court.—Yet, once again,
Beware Rienzi! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Before the Gates of the Capitol—The stage darkened.

ALBERTI, PAOLO, Citizens, &c. *Crowd in the background.*

FIRST CIT. This is the chosen spot. A brave assemblage!

SECOND CIT. Why, yes. No marvel that Rienzi struck
So bold a blow. I had heard shrewd reports
Of heats, and discontents, and gathering bands,
But never dream'd of Cola.

PAO. 'Tis the spot!
Where loiters he? The night wears on apace.

ALB. It is not yet the hour.

FIRST CIT. Who speaks?

ANOTHER CIT. Alberti,
The captain of the guard; he, and his soldiers,
Have joined our faction.

ALB. Comrades, we shall gain
An easy victory. The Ursini,
Drunk with false hope and brute debauch, feast high
Within their palace. Never wore emprise
A fairer face.

PAO. And yet the summer heaven,
Sky, moon, and stars, are overcast. The saints
Send that this darkness—

Enter RIENZI from the back.

RIE. [*Advancing to the front.*] Darkness! did ye never
Watch the dark glooming of the thunder-cloud,
Ere the storm burst? We'll light this darkness, sir,
With the brave flash of spear and sword.

ALL THE CITIZENS SHOUT. Rienzi!
Live, brave Rienzi! honest Cola!

RIE. Friends!

CITIZENS. Long live Rienzi!

ALB. Listen to him.

RIE. Friends,
I come not here to talk. Ye know too well
The story of our thralldom. We are slaves!
The bright sun rises to his course, and lights
A race of slaves! He sets, and his last beam
Falls on a slave: not such as, swept along
By the full tide of power, the conqueror leads
To crimson glory and undying fame;
But base ignoble slaves, slaves to a horde
Of petty tyrants, feudal despots, lords
Rich in some dozen paltry villages,
Strong in some hundred spearmen, only great
In that strange spell, a name. Each hour, dark fraud,
Or open rapine, or protected murder,
Cry out against them. But this very day,
An honest man, my neighbour. [*Pointing to PAOLO.*] There
he stands,—
Was struck, struck like a dog, by one who wore
The badge of Ursini, because, forsooth,
He tossed not high his ready cap in air,
Nor lifted up his voice in servile shouts,
At sight of that great ruffian. Be we men,
And suffer such dishonour? Men, and wash not

The stain away in blood? Such shames are common :
I have known deeper wrongs. I that speak to ye,
I had a brother once, a gracious boy,
Full of all gentleness, of calmest hope,
Of sweet and quiet joy. There was the look
Of heaven upon his face, which limners give
To the beloved disciple. How I loved
That gracious boy! Younger by fifteen years,
Brother at once and son! He left my side;
A summer bloom on his fair cheeks, a smile
Parting his innocent lips. In one short hour
The pretty harmless boy was slain! I saw
The corse, the mangled corse, and when I cried
For vengeance—Rouse, ye Romans! Rouse, ye slaves!
Have ye brave sons? Look in the next fierce brawl
To see them die. Have ye fair daughters? Look
To see them live, torn from your arms, distained,
Dishonoured; and, if ye dare call for justice,
Be answered by the lash. Yet, this is Rome,
That sate on her seven hills, and from her throne
Of beauty ruled the world! Yet, we are Romans!
Why, in that elder day, to be a Roman
Was greater than a king! And once again,—
Hear me, ye walls, that echoed to the tread
Of either Brutus!—once again, I swear,
The eternal city shall be free; her sons
Shall walk with princes. Ere to-morrow's dawn,
The tyrants—

FIRST CIT. Hush! Who passes there?

[*Citizens retire back.*]

ALB. A foe,
By his proud bearing. Seize him.

RIE. As I deem,
'Tis Angelo Colonna. Touch him not,—

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I would hold parley with him. Good Alberti,
The hour is nigh. Away! [Exit ALBERTI.

Enter ANGELO COLONNA.

Now, sir! [To ANGELO.

ANG. What be ye,
That thus in stern and watchful mystery
Cluster beneath the veil of night, and start
To hear a stranger's foot?

RIE. Romans.

ANG. And wherefore
Meet ye, my countrymen?

RIE. For freedom.

ANG. Surely,
Thou art Cola di Rienzi?

RIE. Ay, the voice,
The traitor voice.

ANG. I knew thee by the words.
Who, save thyself, in this bad age, when man
Lies prostrate like yon temple, dared conjoin
The sounds of Rome and freedom?

RIE. I shall teach
The world to blend those words, as in the days
Before the Cæsars. Thou shalt be the first
To hail the union. I have seen thee hang
On tales of the world's mistress, till thine eyes
Flooded with strong emotion, have let fall
Big tear-drops on thy cheeks, and thy young hand
Hath clenched thy maiden sword. Unsheath it now,
Now, at thy country's call! What, dost thou pause?
Is the flame quenched? Dost falter? Hence with thee,
Pass on! pass while thou may!

ANG. Hear me, Rienzi.
Even now my spirit leaps up at the thought

Of those brave storied days, a treasury
Of matchless visions, bright and glorified,
Paling the dim lights of this darkling world
With the golden blaze of heaven; but past and gone,
As clouds of yesterday, as last night's dream.

RIE. A dream! Dost see yon phalanx, still and
stern.

An hundred leaders, each with such a band,
So armed, so resolute, so fixed in will,
Wait with suppressed impatience till they hear
The great bell of the Capitol, to spring
At once on their proud foes. Join them.

ANG. My father!

RIE. Already he hath quitted Rome.

ANG. My kinsmen!

RIE. We are too strong for contest. Thou shalt see
No other change within our peaceful streets
Than that of slaves to freemen. Such a change
As is the silent step from night to day,
From darkness into light. We talk too long.

ANG. Yet reason with them; warn them.

RIE. And their answer,
Will be the gaol, the gibbet, or the axe,
The keen retort of power. Why, I have reasoned;
And, but that I am held, amongst your great ones,
Half madman and half fool, these bones of mine
Had whitened on yon wall. Warn them! They met
At every step dark warnings. The pure air,
Where'er they passed, was heavy with the weight
Of sullen silence; friend met friend, nor smiled,
Till the last footfall of the tyrant's steed
Had died upon the ear; and low and hoarse
Hatred came murmuring like the deep voice
Of the wind before the tempest. Sir, the boys,

The unfledged boys, march at their mother's hest,
Beside their grandsires ; even the girls of Rome,
The gentle and the delicate, array
Their lovers in this cause. I have one yonder,
Claudia Rienzi,—thou hast seen the maid—
A silly trembler, a slight fragile toy,
As ever nursed a dove, or reared a flower,—
Yet she, even she, is pledged—

ANG. To whom ? to whom ?

RIE. To Liberty. Was never virgin vowed
In the fair temple over-right our house
To serve the goddess, Vesta, as my child
Is dedicate to Freedom. A king's son
Might kneel in vain for Claudia. None shall wed her,
Save a true champion of the cause.

ANG. I'll join ye : [Gives his hand to RIENZI.]
How shall I swear ?

RIE. [*To the People.*] Friends, comrades, countrymen !
I bring unhop'd-for aid. Young Angelo,
The immediate heir of the Colonna, craves
To join your band.

All the Citizens shout—He's welcome !

[Coming forward.]

ANG. Hear me swear
By Rome—by freedom—by Rienzi ! Comrades,
How have you titled your deliverer ? consul,
Dictator, emperor ?

The People shout—Consul ! Emperor ! &c. &c.

RIE. No :
Those names have been so often steeped in blood,
So shamed by folly, so profaned by sin,
The sound seems ominous,—I'll none of them.
Call me the Tribune of the People : there
My honouring duty lies.

(The Citizens shout—Hail to our Tribune! The bell sounds thrice; shouts again; and a military band is heard playing a march without.)

Ha! the bell, the bell!

The knell of tyranny, the mighty voice,
That, to the city and the plain, to earth,
And listening heaven, proclaims the glorious tale
Of Rome re-born, and Freedom. See, the clouds
Are swept away, and the moon's boat of light
Sails in the clear blue sky, and million stars
Look out on us, and smile.

[The gate of the Capitol opens, and ALBERTI and Soldiers, join the People, and lay the keys at RIENZI's feet.]

Hark! that great voice
Hath broke our bondage. Look, without a stroke
The Capitol is won, the gates unfold,
The keys are at our feet. Alberti, friend,
How shall I pay thy service? Citizens!
First to possess the palace citadel,
The famous strength of Rome; then to sweep on,
Triumphant, through her streets.

[As RIENZI and the People are entering the Capitol, he pauses.]

Oh, glorious wreck
Of gods and Cæsars! Thou shalt reign again,
Queen of the world; and I—Come on, come on,
My people!

CITIZENS. Live Rienzi—live our Tribune!

[Exeunt through the gates into the Capitol.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

*The Outside of a Court of Justice, a Crowd round the Gates—
Persons descending the Steps from time to time.*

*Enter PAOLO and the FIRST CITIZEN, meeting the SECOND
CITIZEN, who advances to them from the Steps.*

PAO. [*To the Second Cit.*] How goes the trial?

SECOND CIT. Bravely.

PAO. [*To the First Cit. in front.*] A fair day.
Good neighbour, thou'rt a stranger.

FIRST CIT. I have been
Away from Rome, good Paolo, since the day
Of our deliverance, when Rienzi punished
A servant of the Ursini, for striking
Thy bonnet from thy head.

PAO. And now thou find'st
This same Rienzi in a way to punish
The master.

FIRST CIT. Martin Ursini?

PAO. The Tribune
Now sits in judgment on him.

FIRST CIT. Wherefore?

SECOND CIT. Sir,
For a breach of the new law, the mighty plunder
Of a vast wreck, an argosy, a booty
To tempt an emperor.

FIRST CIT. Martin Ursini !
Almost our senator ! The fearful head
Of the fearfullest name of Rome.

PAO. Ay, he is like—

[To Cit. passing from the Hall.]

How goes the trial ?

THIRD CIT. Well.

[Crosses, and exit.]

PAO. Is like to swing
From a gibbet in the Forum.

FIRST CIT. Will he dare ?

SECOND CIT. Dare ! why thou saw'st his spirit ; now his
power

Matches his will ; and never lineal prince
Sate firmer on his throne, or lightlier swayed
The reins of empire. He hath swept away
The oppressors and extortioners, hath gained
Kingly allies, hath reconciled the pope,
Hath quelled the barons.

FIRST CIT. Ay, I rode to Rome
With a follower of Colonna. Angelo
Hath won his father to submission.

[Shouts within the court—Persons come rapidly out.]

PAO. *[To a Citizen, passing.]* Hark !

The prisoner is condemned ?

FOURTH CIT. He is. Rienzi
Heard him with a grave patience ; almost leaning
To mercy. But the fact was flagrant.

[Persons passing from the Court of Justice over the Stage.]

FIRST CIT. Hark !

Another shout. Where go ye?

FIFTH CIT. To the Forum,
To wait the execution.

Enter RIENZI, attended; and followed by URSINI, FRANGI-PANI, and other Nobles.

SECOND CIT. Ha, the Tribune!
And the great prisoner's kindred!

CITIZENS. Live Rienzi!
Live our just Tribune!

[All shout when RIENZI is in the front.]

URS. Good my lord, beseech thee—

RIE. Ye plead in vain.

URS. Yet hear me.—Force me not
To appeal against thy sentence.

RIE. Ay! To whom?
There stand my judges, lords, and yours: the people,
The free and honest people! Seek of them
If I hold even the scales of justice.

CITIZENS. Live
Our Tribune! our just Tribune!

[Shout—Exit RIENZI with Citizens.]

FRA. Follow not,
But seek Lord Angelo: he hath a power
Over this haughty despot.

URS. Gods! what tyranny
Men will endure in freedom's name. Yes, yes!
Lord Angelo! my foeman though he be,
His old hereditary pride will rise
Against this churl's base purpose. If his power—

FRA. The daughter! Claudia! Quick to seek Colonna;
The Tribune holds his court at noon. Quick! Quick!

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

An Apartment in the Capitol.

*Enter CLAUDIA, BERTA, TERESA, and ROSA.—All but
CLAUDIA embroidering, &c.*

TER. Sweet lady, why so sad ?

CLA. I know not.

BER. Try

Yon emerald carcanet, or let me braid
These pearls in thy long tresses.

TER. She affects not
Such glittering baubles ; rather sing to her
One of thy songs from the cold north.

ROSA. Shall Berta
Sing to thee, lady.

CLA. Yes, I care not. *[Goes to the couch, and sits.]*

TER. Sing.

SONG.—BERTA.

The red rose is queen of the garden-bower, X
That glows in the sun at noon ;
And the lady lily's the fairest flower
That swings her white bells in the breeze of June ;
But they who come 'mid frost and flood,
Peeping from bank, or root of tree,
The primrose and the violet-bud,—
They are the dearest flowers to me.

The nightingale's is the sweetest song
That ever the rose hath heard ;
And when the lark sings, the white clouds among,
The lily looks up to the heavenly bird :

But the robin, with its eye of jet,
Who pipes from the bare boughs merrily
To the primrose pale and the violet,—
His is the dearest song to me.

TER. Didst like the strain ?

CLA. There's a deep wisdom in it :
The lowly blossom, and the wintry friend,
They are the dearest. I'm set i' the sun
To wither.

ROSA. She is sad again. Wouldst hear
A merry story, lady ? Or a tale
Of murder to divert thee ?

BER. Or a legend
Fresh from the Holy Land ?

Enter RIENZI.

TER. The Tribune ! [CLAUDIA rises hastily.]

RIE. Leave us. [The Ladies rise and go out.]

Claudia—nay, start not ! Thou art sad to-day
I found thee sitting idly, 'midst thy maids
A pretty, laughing, restless band, who plied
Quick tongue and nimble finger, mute and pale
As marble ; those unseeing eyes were fixed
On vacant air ; and that fair brow was bent
As sternly as if the rude stranger, Thought,
Age-giving, mirth-destroying, pitiless Thought,
Had knocked at thy young giddy brain.

CLA. Nay, father,
Mock not thine own poor Claudia.

RIE. Claudia used
To bear a merry heart, with that clear voice,
Prattling ; and that light busy foot, astir
In her small housewifery, the blithest bee

That ever wrought in hive.

CLA. Oh ! mine old home !

RIE. What ails thee, lady-bird ?

CLA. Mine own dear home !

Father, I love not this new state ; these halls.
Where comfort dies in vastness ; these trim maids,
Whose service wearies me. Oh ! mine old home !
My quiet, pleasant chamber, with the myrtle
Woven round the casement ; and the cedar by,
Shading the sun ; my garden overgrown
With flowers and herbs, thick-set as grass in fields ;
My pretty snow-white doves ; my kindest nurse ;
And old Camillo.—Oh ! mine own dear home !

RIE. Why, simple child, thou hast thine old fond nurse,
And good Camillo, and shalt have thy doves,
Thy myrtles, flowers, and cedars ; a whole province
Laid in a garden, an' thou wilt. My Claudia,
Hast thou not learnt thy power ? Ask orient gems,
Diamonds and sapphires, in rich caskets, wrought
By cunning goldsmiths ; sigh for rarest birds,
Of farthest Ind, like wingèd flowers, to flit
Around thy stately bower ; and, at a wish,
The precious toys shall wait thee. Old Camillo !
Thou shalt have nobler servants, emperors, kings,
Electors, princes ! not a bachelor
In Christendom but would right proudly kneel
To my fair daughter.

CLA. Oh ! mine own dear home !

RIE. Wilt have a list to choose from ? Listen, sweet !
If the tall cedar, and the branchy myrtle,
And the white doves, were tell-tales, I would ask them
Whose was the shadow on the sunny wall ?
And if, at eventide, they heard not oft
A tuneful mandoline, and then a voice,

Clear in its manly depth, whose tide of song
O'erwhelmed the quivering instrument ; and then
A world of whispers, mixed with low response,
Sweet, short, and broken, as divided strains
Of nightingales.

CLA. Oh, father ! father !

RIE. Well !

Dost love him, Claudia ?

CLA. Father !

RIE. Dost thou love

Young Angelo ? Yes ? Saidst thou yes ? That heart,
That throbbing heart of thine, keeps such a coil,
I cannot hear thy words. He is returned
To Rome ; he left thee on mine errand, dear one :
And now—Is there no casement myrtle-wreathed,
No cedar in our courts, to shade to-night
The lover's song ?

CLA. Oh, father ! father !

RIE. Now,

Back to thy maidens, with a lightened heart,
Mine own beloved child. Thou shalt be first
In Rome, as thou art fairest ; never princess
Brought to the proud Colonna such a dower
As thou. Young Angelo hath chosen his mate
From out an eagle's nest.

CLA. Alas ! alas !

I tremble at the height. Whene'er I think
Of the hot barons, of the fickle people
And the inconstancy of power, I tremble
For thee, dear father.

RIE. Tremble ! Let them tremble.

I am their master, Claudia ! whom they scorned,
Endured, protected.—Sweet, go dream of love !—
I am their master, Claudia.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

A Magnificent Hall in the Capitol.

*Enter COLONNA, URSINI, FRANGIPANI, CAFARELLO, the
Nuncio, an Ambassador, Nobles, &c.*

COL. Gibbet and cord! a base plebeian death!
And he the head of the great Roman name,
That rivalled the Colonna! Ursini,
Thy brother shall not die. The grief is thine,
The shame is general. How say ye, barons?

URS. If ye resist, ye share his doom. Plead! plead!
Dissemble with the tyrant,—stifle hate,
And master scorn, as I have done. Plead for him.

COL. To Cola! Can I frame my speech to sue
To Cola, most familiar of the drones
That thronged my hall of afternoons, content
To sit below the salt, and bear all jests,
The retinue and pest of greatness. Sue
To Cola!

URS. Fear not, but revenge will come,
We being friends, from whose dissension sprang
The usurper's strength. An hour will come.

Enter ANGELO.

Lord Angelo,
Thou wilt not fail us.

ANG. Surely, no! 'Tis stern [Goes up to URSINI.
Revengeful, cruel, pitiless! The people,
To soothe the fickle people! Yet he's wiser:
He'll be persuaded.

FRA. He approaches.

[*Music without.*

COL. What!
Ushered with music as a king.

Enter RIENZI, attended.

RIE. Why, this
Is well, my lords, this full assemblage. Now
The chief of Rome stands fitly girt with names
Strong as their towers around him. Fall not off,
And we shall be impregnable. [*Advancing up the Room.*
Lord Nuncio,
I should have ask'd thy blessing. I have sent
Our missives to the pontiff. Count Savelli,—
My lord ambassador, I crave your pardon,
What news from Venice, the sea-queen? Savelli,
I have a little maiden who must know
Thy fairest daughter. Angelo! Colonna!
A double welcome! Rome lacked half her state
Wanting her princely Columns.

COL. Sir, I come
A suitor to thee. Martin Ursini—

RIE. When last his name was on thy lips—Well, sir,
Thy suit, thy suit! If pardon, take at once
My answer—No.

ANG. Yet, mercy—

RIE. Angelo,
Waste not thy pleadings on a desperate cause
And a resolvèd spirit. She awaits thee.
Haste to that fairer court. [*Exit ANGELO.*
My Lord Colonna,
This is a needful justice.

COL. Noble Tribune,
It is a crime which custom—

RIE. Ay, the law
Of the strong against the weak—your law, the law

Of the sword and spear. But, gentles, ye live now
Under the good estate.

SAV. He is noble.

RIE. Therefore,
A thousand times he dies. Ye are noble, sirs,
And need a warning.

COL. Sick, almost to death.

RIE. Ye have less cause to grieve.

FRA. New-wedded.

RIE. Ay,
Madonna Laura is a blooming dame,
And will become her weeds.

CAF. Remember, Tribune,
He hath two uncles, cardinals. Wouldst outrage
The sacred college?

RIE. The lord cardinals,
Meek, pious, lowly men, and loving virtue,
Will render thanks to him who wipes a blot
So flagrant from their name.

COL. An Ursini!
Head of the Ursini!

URS. Mine only brother! [Crossing to RIENZI.]

RIE. And dar'st thou talk to me of brothers? Thou,
Whose groom—Wouldst have me break my own just laws,
To save thy brother? Thine! Hast thou forgotten
When that most beautiful and blameless boy,
The prettiest piece of innocence that ever
Breath'd in this sinful world, lay at thy feet,
Slain by thy pampered minion, and I knelt
Before thee for redress, whilst thou—Didst never
Hear talk of retribution? This is justice,
Pure justice, not revenge!—Mark well, my lords,—
Pure equal justice. Martin Ursini
Had open trial, is guilty, is condemned,

And he shall die.

COL. Yet listen to us—

RIE. Lords,

If ye could range before me all the peers,
Prelates, and potentates of Christendom,
The holy pontiff kneeling at my knee,
And emperors crouching at my feet, to sue
For this great robber, still I should be blind
As justice. But this very day a wife,
One infant hanging at her breast, and two,
Scarce bigger, first-born twins of misery,
Clinging to the poor rags that scarcely hid
Her squalid form, grasped at my bridle-rein
To beg her husband's life, condemned to die
For some vile petty theft, some paltry scudi :
And, whilst the fiery war-horse chaf'd and reared,
Shaking his crest, and plunging to get free,
There, midst the dangerous coil, unmov'd, she stood,
Pleading in broken words, and piercing shrieks,
And hoarse low shivering sobs, the very cry
Of nature ! And, when I at last said No—
For I said No to her—she flung herself
And those poor innocent babes between the stones
And my hot Arab's hoofs. We sav'd them all,
Thank Heaven, we saved them all ! but I said No
To that sad woman, midst her shrieks. Ye dare not
Ask me for mercy now.

Sav. Yet he is noble !

Let him not die a felon's death.

RIE. Again !

Ye weary me. No more of this. Colonna,
Thy son loves my fair daughter. 'Tis an union,
However my young Claudia might have graced
A monarch's side, that augurs hopefully,

Bliss to the wedded pair, and peace to Rome,
And it shall be accomplished. Good, my lords,
I bid ye to the bridal; one and all,
I bid ye to the bridal feast. And now
A fair good morrow!

[*Exit RIENZI, attended by Nuncio, Ambassador, and other
Lords, &c.*

Sav. Hath stern destiny
Clothed him in this man's shape, that, in a breath,
He deals out death and marriage? Ursini!
Colonna! be ye stunned?

Col. I'll follow him!
Tyrant! usurper! base-born churl! to deem
That son of mine—

Urs. Submit, as I have done,
For vengeance. From our grief and shame shall spring
A second retribution; and this banquet,
This nuptial banquet, this triumphal hour,
Shall be the very scene of our revenge!
I may not loiter here. The fatal moment
Of our disgrace is nigh. Ere evening close,
I'll seek thee at thy palace. Seem to yield,
And victory is sure.

Col. I'll take thy counsel.

[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Capitol.—The Tribune's Crimson Chair, elevated on two Steps—a splendid Banquet, Lords and Ladies seated round the Tables.

Enter SAVELLI, FRANGIPANI, and CAFARELLO, who advance to the front—CAMILLO and other Attendants in the Back-ground.

SAV. He bears him like a prince, save that he lacks
The port serene of majesty. His mood
Is fitful; stately now, and sad; anon,
Full of a hurried mirth; courteous awhile,
And mild; then bursting, on a sudden, forth,
Into sharp biting taunts.

FRA. And at the altar,
When he first found the proud and angry mother
Refused to grace the nuptials, even the Nuncio
Quailed at his fiery threats.

CAF. I saw Colonna
Gnawing his lip for wrath.

Sav. Why, this new power
Mounts to the brain like wine. For such disease,
Your skilful leech lets blood.

Fra. Suspects he aught
Of our design? we hunt a subtle quarry.

Sav. But with a wilier huntsman.

Enter URSINI.

Ursini,
Hath every point been guarded? be the masquers
Valiant and strongly armed? have ye ta'en order
To close the gates, to seize his train, to cut
The cordage of the bell, that none may summon
The people to his rescue?

Urs. All is cared for,
And vengeance certain. Before set of sun,
We shall be masters of ourselves, of Rome,
And Rome's proud ruler. This quaint masque of ours—

Cap. What is the watchword?

Urs. Death.

Fra. Peace, peace—he comes!

[FRANGIPANI, CAFARELLO, and SAVELLI retire up the stage.]

*Enter ANGELO, CLAUDIA, and Ladies. As ANGELO leads in
CLAUDIA, followed by two Ladies, all the visitors to the
banquet rise, and curtsy to CLAUDIA, who returns it, and
remains conversing with the Ladies.*

Fra. No, 'tis the blooming bride. Young Angelo
Hath no ill choice in beauty.

Sav. 'Tis a maid
Shy as a ringdove. See, how delicate,
How gentle, yet how coy! Poor pretty fool,

No harm must happen her.

URS. None, none. [ANGELO advances to them.]

CAR. [To ANGELO.] Good kinsman,
I would not have thee hear Savelli speak
Of thy fair bride.

ANG. Ah! doth he praise her? Lords,
Beseech ye sit. [Lords and Ladies sit down.] Savelli, I
would fain

Make of thy daughter and my blushing wife
A pair of lovely friends. Look where they stand,
The fairest two in Rome.

FRA. The Tribune comes.

Enter RIENZI and COLONNA.

RIE. Where lags our hostess? Take thy state, fair
bride—

Thy one day's queenship. See, the nuptial wreath
Sits crown-like on thy brow; thy nuptial robe
Flows royally. Come, come, be gracious! Bid
A smiling welcome to the subject world,
Nay, never blush nor hang thy head; remember
Thou art a Colonna. Wouldst thou be the first
Of that proud name to ape the peasant's virtue,
Humility? Fie! fie!

COL. Sir, the Colonna—

ANG. Nay, good my father, sure to-day our name
Hath cause of pride.

COL. Heaven grant it prove so!

SAV. Lady,
Thou art silent still.

ANG. Shall I speak for thee, love?
Oh, weak and ineffectual were my words,

Matched with thy burning blush, thy quivering smile,
Thy conscious silence, Claudia!—Gentle friends,
Ye are nobly welcome.

RIE. This is well, fair son!

Yet we lack mirth. Have ye no masque astir?
No dance, no music, no quaint mystery,
To drive away the spectre, Thought? A bridal
Is but a gilt and painted funeral
To the fond father who hath yielded up
His one sweet child. Claudia, thy love, thy duty,
Thy very name, is gone. Thou art another's;
Thou hast a master now; and I have thrown
My precious pearl away. Yet men who give
A living daughter to the fickle will
Of a capricious bridegroom, laugh—the madmen!
Laugh at the jocund bridal feast, and weep
When the fair corse is laid in blessed rest,
Deep, deep in mother earth. Oh, happier far,
So to have lost my child!

CLA. Father!

ANG. Thou hast gained
A son, not lost a daughter.

RIE. Love her, Angelo;
Be kind to her as I have been; defend her,
Cherish her, love her.

ANG. More than life.

[*Hands CLAUDIA to the throne, and sits by her.*]

RIE. Bring mirth,
Music, and dance, and song, and I will laugh,
And chase away these images of death
That float afore mine eyes. A song, a song!

[*Sits down in the Chair of State.*]

SAV. [*To URSINI.*] Thou shouldst have named the masque.

URS. [*To SAVELLI.*] Better anon.

SONG.

Hail to the gentle bride! the dove
 High nested in the column's crest!
 Oh, welcome as the bird of love
 Who bore the olive-sign of rest!

Cho. Hail to the bride!

Hail to the gentle bride! the flower
 Whose garlands round the column twine!
 Oh, fairer than the citron bower!
 More fragrant than the blossom'd vine!

Cho. Hail to the bride!

Hail to the gentle bride! the star
 Whose radiance o'er the column beams!
 Oh, soft as moonlight, seen afar,
 A silver shine on trembling streams!

Cho. Hail to the bride!

RIE. A pleasant strain!

[*A Citizen rushes from amongst the Attendants, and presents a paper to RIENZI.*]

What wouldst thou, friend?

CIT. [*Gives a paper to RIENZI.*] May it please thee
 To read this scroll, great Tribune.

URS. [*To COLONNA.*] Can the dæmon
 To whom his soul is pledged have ta'en this way
 To show our secret? No, he smiles! he smiles!
 His hand shakes not!—I breathe again.

RIE. [*To Citizen.*] Fair sir,
 All thou hast asked is granted. [*Exit Citizen.*]
 'Tis no day

To frown on a petition. Mirth, my lords,
 Bring Mirth! I brook no pause of revelry.
 Have ye no masque?

SAV. *[To URSINI.]* He rushes in the toils ;
Now weave the meshes round him.

URS. Sooth, my lord,
We had plotted to surprise the gentle bride
With a slight dance, a toy, an antic.

RIE. Ay,
And when ?

URS. Soon as the bell tolled four, the masquers
Were bid to enter.

RIE. Four ? And how attired ?

URS. Turban'd and rob'd, and with swart visages
A troop of lusty Moors.

RIE. Camillo, hark !
Admit these revellers—Mark me—
*[Gives orders in a low voice to CAMILLO, and also the paper
which he has just received from the Citizen.]*

URS. *[Aside.]* Now, vengeance, thou art mine !

RIE. Wine—wine ! *[To an Attendant.]*
Fill me a goblet high with sparkling wine !

[The Attendant fills a goblet, and presents it to RIENZI.]
Fill high, my noble guests. Claudia Rienzi
And Angelo Colonna ! Bless'd be they
And we in their fair union ! Doubly curs'd
Whoe'er in wish or thought would loose that tie
The bond of peace to Rome ! Drink, good my lords,
Fill high the mantling wine, and in the bowl
Be all unkindness buried !

URS. Heartily
We pledge you, noble Tribune.

[All rise except COLONNA.]

RIE. Why, Colonna !
Brother !—*[COLONNA rises.]* He startles at the word. He
eyes

The cup as it were poisoned. Dost thou think
We've drugged the draught? I'll be thy taster.—Drink!
The wine is honest! We're no traitors!

URS. Drink!

I pr'ythee, drink!

COL. Health to the gentle bride!

[*Drinks.*]

Health to my children!

RIE. This is fatherly,

Noble Colonna, this is princely. Now,
If any scorn thee, Claudia, say Colonna,
Whose word is truth, hailed thee his child.

[*Rises.*]

CLA. My lords

And kinsmen all, if a poor simple maid,
And yet Rienzi's daughter, so may dare
To call ye, take my thanks. On every head
Be every fair wish trebled! Gentle friends—

[*Rises to go, attended by ANGELO, and followed by the Ladies.*]

RIE. Wilt thou not wait the masque?

[*Exeunt CLAUDIA, ANGELO, and Ladies.*]

Thou wilt not.—Well!

We must carouse the deeper. Hark, Francesco!
Go bid the fountains, from their marble mouths,
Pour the rich juice of the Sicilian grape,
A flood of molten rubies, that our kind
And drouthy fellow-citizens may chorus
Hail to the gentle bride. I would fain bid
Old Tiber flow with wine. Another cup
To thee and thine, Colonna! Fill the bowl,
Higher and higher! Let the phantom, fear,
And doubt, that haunts round princes, and suspicion,
That broods a harpy o'er the banquet, flee
Down to the uttermost depths of hell. A health

To thee and thine, Colonna!

URS. Of what doubt
Speaks our great Tribune?

RIE. A fit tale of mirth,
To crown the goblet!

Enter the Masquers at different sides.

Doubt! Spake I of doubt?
Fear! Said I fear? So fenced around by friends,
Allies, and kinsmen, what have I to fear
From treason or from traitors? Say yon band
Were rebels, ye would guard me! Call them murderers,
Ye would avenge me!

URS. Ay, by death.

RIE. And thou?

COL. By death!

RIE. Seize the foul traitors. Ye have passed

[To the Masquers, who seize the Nobles, &c.]

Your own just sentence. Yield, my masters, yield!
Your men are overpowered; your masquers chained;
The courts are lined with guards, and at one stroke,
One touch upon this bell, the strength of Rome,
All that hath life within her walls, will rise
To crush ye. Yield your swords. Do ye not shame
To wear them?—Yield your swords.

Re-enter ANGELO.

ANG. Rienzi!

[Then to one of the Guards, who seizes COLONNA.]

Villain!

An thou but touch the Lord Colonna, ay,
An thou but dare to lay thy ruffian hand
Upon his garment—

RIE. Seize his sword.

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ANG. Again!

Art frenetic, Rienzi?

RIE. Seek of them.

ANG. Father, in mercy, speak! Give me a cause;
And, though a legion hemmed thee in, thy son
Should rescue thee. Speak but one word, dear father,
Only one word! Sure as I live, thou art guiltless;
Sure as the sun tracks his bright path in heaven,
Thy course is pure. Yet speak!

RIE. He is silent.

ANG. Speak.

RIE. Doth not that silence answer thee? Look on them.
Thou know'st them, Angelo:—the bold Savelli,
The Frangipani, and the Ursini,
Ay, and the high Colonna; well thou knowest
Each proud and lofty visage. Mark them, now:
They should be signed as Cain of old, for Guilt,
Detected, baffled, murderous Guilt, hath set
His bloody hand upon them. Son, thou shudderest!
Their tawny masquers should have slain me; here,
Before my daughter's eyes; here, at thy bridal;
Here in my festive hour,—the mutual cup
Sparkling; the mutual pledge half spoke; the bread,
Which we have broke together, unconsumed
Upon the board; joyful, and full of wine;
Sinful and unconfessed; so had I fallen;
And so—The word was death! From their own lips
Came their own righteous sentence—Death!

ANG. Oh, mercy!

Mercy! Thou liv'st. 'Twas but the intent—

RIE. My death

Were nothing; but, through me, the traitors struck
At peace, at liberty, at Rome, my country,
Bright and regenerate, the world's mistress once,

And doomed, like the old fabled bird, to rise
Strong from her ashes. Did ye think the people
Could spare their Tribune? Did ye deem them weary
Of equal justice; and mild law; and freedom
As liberal as the air; and mighty fame,
A more resplendent sun? Sirs, I am guarded
By the invisible shield of love, which blunts
The darts of treachery. I cannot die,
Whilst Rome commands me live. For ye, foul traitors,
I pardon ye, and I despise ye. Go!
Ye are free.

ANG. [*To Rienzi.*] Oh, thanks, my father.

COL. Said he thanks?

Chains, bring me chains! such words from such a tongue
Were slavery worse than death! Chains! chains!

RIE. Ye are free.

COL. Is the proud pillar of Colonna fallen,
That base plebeian feet bestride its shaft?
Is Ursini's strong bear muzzled and chained,
That every cur—

SAV. Good cousin, pr'ythee peace;
The Tribune means us fairly.

RIE. Still ye are free.
Yet mark me, signors:—Tame your rebel bloods;
Be faithful subjects to the good estate;
Demolish your strong towers, which overtop
Our beautiful city with barbarian pride,
Loosing fell rapine, discord, and revenge,
From out their dens accurs'd. Be quiet subjects,
And ye shall find the state a gentle mistress.
Else—

COL. Doth he threaten?

URS. Hush! this is no time.

An hour will come—

RIE. What, do you mutter, traitors ?
Follow me instant to the Lateran.
There, at the holy altar, with such rites
As to profane were sin more damnable
Than treason ever dared, to offer up
Your vowed allegiance to freed Rome, to me,
Her servant, minister, deliverer, me,
Your master ! Ye are free ; but I will chain
Your rebel souls with oaths. Follow me, sirs.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Capitoline Hill.

Enter URSINI and FRANGIPANI.

FRA. Nay, Ursini, why pluck me by the sleeve ?
Why steal from the procession ? Why awaken
The tyrant's anger ?

URS. For revenge ! Ye are stunned,
Bewildered, as men rousing from a dream,
That know not where they stand. Dost thou not see
Our great revenge is sure ? The tyrant walks
Blinded by his vain-glory ; confident
In that straw fetter, an extorted oath ;
And we—Why are we not resolved ? And be not
Our bold retainers waiting armed in proof,
Without the gates of Rome ? What, if to-night—

FRA. This very hour. Our tried and hardy band,
Led by the chivalry of Rome, could carry
The city at a charge ; and Rome herself
Will rise against the madman.

URS. Here comes one
Whose name were worth a host. Didst thou not mark,

How, stung by the sharp scorn Rienzi flung
On proud Colonna, the young bridegroom broke
From his new father's side ?

Enter ANGELO.

URS. Lord Angelo,
A truant from this pageant ?

ANG. As thou see'st.

URS. Yet thy good father, our great Tribune—

ANG. Sir,
I am a son of the Colonna.

URS. Ay,
The heir of that most princely house ; and, sir,
Fair though she be, a friend must frankly wish
She owned another sire.

ANG. No more ! no more !

Enter SAVELLI and CAFARELLO.

URS. How passed the ceremonial, Count ? Beseech thee,
Tell us of these new rites.

SAV. The noble train
Rolled smoothly on. Rienzi led the band
Right royally, sceptred and robed, and backing
A milk-white Arab, from whose eyeballs flashed
Quick gleams of glittering light. Colonna held
The bridle-rein.

ANG. Stephen Colonna !

SAV. Ay—
Thy father, sir. We meaner barons walked
Behind, bareheaded, and with folded arms,
As men doing penance to the holy shrine
Of St. John Lateran. Then came a mummary
Of oaths to that indefinite she, the State—

Republic, sir, is out of date—and then—

CAR. Ay, tell that impious outrage.

SAV. Then Rienzi,

Stepping before the altar, his bold hand
Laid on the consecrated Host, sent forth,
In a full pealing voice, that rolled along
The fretted roof, like the loud organ-swell,
A rash and insolent summons to the Pope
And Cardinals; next he cited to appear
The imperial rivals, Charles and Lewis; next,
The Electors Palatine. Then, whilst the aisles
Of the hushed church prolonged his words, he drew
His dazzling sword, and, waving the bright blade
To the four points of Heaven, cried with a deep
Intensity of will, that drove his words
Like arrows through the brain,—“This, too, is mine.”
Yes, to each part of this fair earth he cried,—
“Thou, too, art mine.”

ANG. Madman! And ye—

SAV. We listened

In patience and in silence; whilst he stood
His form dilating, and his haughty glance
Instinct with fiery pride.

ANG. Now, by St. John,

Had I been there, ye should have heard a voice
Answer this frenzied summoner.

URS. Our answer

Is yet unspoken. Angelo Colonna,
If the old glories of thy princely race,
Thy knightly honour, thy fresh-budding fame,
Outshine the red and white of Claudia's cheek,
Then—

ANG. Wherefore pause? I know thee, Ursini,
Rienzi's mortal foe, and scarce a friend

To the Colonna ; yet, in honour's name
Say on !

RIE. [*Without.*] Lead home the steed. I'll walk from
hence.

URS. Meet me at the Colonna Palace. Fail not.

Enter RIENZI, attended by COLONNA, and other Lords.

RIE. Ah ! he is here !—Son ! Ye may leave us, lords,
We are content with your good service.

Son, [*Exeunt all but RIENZI and ANGELO.*]

Methinks this high solemnity might well
Have claimed thy presence. A great ruler's heir
Should be familiar in the people's eyes ;
Live on their tongues ; take root within their hearts ;
Win woman's smiles by honest courtesy,
And force man's tardier praise by bold desert :
So, when the chief shall die, the general love
May hail his successor. But thou, where wast thou ?
If with thy bride—

ANG. I have not seen her. Tribune,—
Thou wav'st away the word with such a scorn
As I poured poison in thine ear. Already
Dost weary of the title ?

RIE. Wherefore should I ?

ANG. Thou art ambitious.

RIE. Granted.

ANG. And wouldst be
A king.

RIE. There thou mistak'st. A king ! Fair son,
Power dwelleth not in sound, and fame hath garlands
Brighter than diadems. I might have been
Anointed, sceptred, crowned, have cast a blaze
Of glory round the old imperial wreath,
The laurel of the Cæsars ; but I chose

To master kings, not be one; to direct
The royal puppets as my sovereign will,
And Rome, my Rome, decree.—Tribune! the Gracchi
Were called so. Tribune! I will make that name
A word of fear to kings.

ANG. Rienzi! Tribune!

Hast thou forgotten, on this very spot,
How thou didst shake the slumbering soul of Rome
With the brave sound of freedom, till she rose,
And from her giant limbs the shackles dropped,
Burst by one mighty throe? Hadst thou died then,
History had crowned thee with a glorious title—
Deliverer of thy country.

RIE. Well!

ANG. Alas!

When now thou fall'st, as fall thou must, 'twill be
The common tale of low ambition. Tyrants
O'erthrown to form a wilder tyranny;
Princes cast down, that thy obscurer house
May rise on noble ruins.

RIE. Hast thou ended?

I fain would have mistaken thee. Hast done?

ANG. No; for despite thy smothered wrath, the voice
Of warning truth shall reach thee. Thou to-day
Hast, by thy frantic sacrilege, drawn on thee
The thunders of the church, the mortal feud
Of either emperor. Here, at home, the barons
Hate, and the people shun thee. Seest thou not,
Even in this noon of pride, thy waning power
Fade, flicker, and wax dim. Thou art as one
Perched on some lofty steeple's dizzy height,
Dazzled by the sun, inebriate by long draughts
Of thinner air; too giddy to look down
Where all his safety lies; too proud to dare

The long descent to the low depths from whence
The desperate climber rose.

RIE. Ay, there's the sting,—
That I, an insect of to-day, outsoar
The reverend worm, nobility! Woulds't shame me
With my poor parentage! Sir, I'm the son
Of him who kept a sordid hostelry
In the Jews' quarter; my good mother cleansed
Linen for honest hire. Canst thou say worse?

ANG. Can worse be said?

RIE. Add, that my boasted schoolcraft
Was gained from such base toil, gained with such pain
That the nice nurture of the mind was oft
Stolen at the body's cost. I have gone dinnerless
And supperless, the scoff of our poor street,
For tattered vestments and lean hungry looks,
To pay the pedagogue. Add what thou wilt
Of injury. Say that, grown into man,
I've known the pittance of the hospital,
And, more degrading still, the patronage
Of the Colonna. Of the tallest trees
The roots delve deepest. Yes, I've trod thy halls,
Scorned and derided midst their ribald crew,
A licensed jester, save the cap and bells:
I have borne this, and I have borne the death,
The unavenged death, of a dear brother.
I seemed, I was a base ignoble slave.
What am I?—Peace, I say!—what am I now?
Head of this great republic, chief of Rome;
In all but name, her sovereign; last of all,
Thy father.

ANG. In an evil hour—

RIE. Dar'st thou

Say that? An evil hour for thee, my Claudia!

Thou shouldst have been an emperor's bride, my fairest !
In evil hour thy woman's heart was caught,
By the form moulded as an antique god ;
The gallant bearing, the feigned tale of love,
All false, all outward, simulated all.

ANG. But that I loved her, but that I do love her,
With a deep tenderness, softer and fonder
Than thy ambition-hardened heart e'er dream'd of,
My sword should answer thee.

RIE. Go to, Lord Angelo ;
Thou lov'st her not. Men taunt not, nor defy
The dear one's kindred. A bright atmosphere
Of sunlight and of beauty breathes around
The bosom's idol. I have lov'd. She loves thee ;
And therefore thy proud father, even the shrew,
Thy railing mother, in her eyes, are sacred.
Lay not thy hand upon thy sword, fair son,
Keep that brave for thy comrades. I'll not fight thee.
Go and give thanks to yonder simple bride,
That her plebeian father mews not up,
Safe in the citadel, her noble husband.
Thou art dangerous, Colonna. But, for her,—
Beware !

[*Going.*

ANG. Come back, Rienzi ! Thus I throw
A brave defiance in thy teeth. [*Throws down his glove.*

RIE. Once more.
Beware !

ANG. Take up the glove !

RIE. This time for her— [*Takes up the glove.*
For her dear sake. Home to thy bride ! home ! home !

ANG. Dost fear me, Tribune of the people !

RIE. Fear !

Do I fear thee !—Tempt me no more.—This once,
Home to thy bride !

[*Exit.*

ANG. Now, Ursini, I come,
Fit partner of thy vengeance!

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

A Hall in the Colonna Palace.

*Enter URSINI, STEPHEN COLONNA, LADY COLONNA, SAVELLI,
FRANGIPANI, and Nobles.*

LADY C. Five thousand horsemen at the gates of Rome,
And armed retainers in each house, and knights
Harness'd in glittering mail, with banner proud,
And trump, and war-cry, hurling their bright spears
At the usurper's head! Why, now I know ye,
My gallant kinsmen. When ye crouched, like hounds,
Beneath the tyrant's lash; or stealthily,
At midnight meetings and below your breath,
Mutter'd of murders, the quick poniard-stroke,
The calculated poison, that consumes
So much of life a day, or that mute slayer,
The Eastern bow-string, chivalry of Rome,
What marvel that I knew ye not, distained
With such base purpose. Now ye have clothed death
In the brave guise of war, and made him gay
And lovely as a bridegroom. Speed ye forth!
Away! the sun is low. Ye have a city
To win, ere night!

COL. Better await the night;
And then, in darkness and in storm, at once
Crush the stunn'd Tribune.

LADY C. Dost thou say await,
Stephen Colonna? Dost thou seek the veil
Of darkness for a deed of light? On, on!

Whilst yet the sunbeams kiss the glittering stream
Of armed knights and barbed steeds. On, on !
Whilst yet the column'd banners of our house
May catch their parting glory, as the peaks
Of highest Alps shine o'er the twilight world.

URS. The lady counsels well. In every street
Stand knots of citizens in sad debate
Of their proud ruler's frenzy. I have sent
Bold tongues amongst them, madam——

Enter ANGELO.

COL. Lo ! thy son !

LADY C. Sir, since he called Rienzi's daughter wife,
I have no son !

ANG. Oh, mother, say not so !
Savelli ! Ursini ! ye bade me hither
With broken phrase and solemn tone, and pause
Of mighty import. Good my lords, I come
To read your mystery. The city's full
Of camp-like noises ; tramp of steeds, and clash
Of mail, and trumpet-blast, and ringing clang
Of busy armourers ; the grim ban-dog bays ;
The champing war-horse in his stall neighs loud ;
The vulture shrieks aloft. Ye are still leagued
Against Rienzi.

URS. Wouldst betray——

ANG. Betray !

Why, I am spurned, derided, scorned, cast off,
As a child's broken toy, Betray ! I come
To join ye. Ay, dear mother, to pull down
The haughty tyrant from his throne, or fall
As may beseem thy son. Angels and saints,
Bear witness to my oath

SAV. I do believe thee

With a most constant faith. On thy clear brow
Honour and victory sit crowned.

ANG. Oh, put me

To the proof, my lords! Why stay we here? Good father,
Think'st thou Suspicion's straining eye-balls sleep.
Or that the watcher, Doubt, hath lost her keen
And delicate sense of sound? We must forerun
The tyrant's fear. Follow me, ye that love
The joy of glorious battle!

LADY C. Angelo!

ANG. Nay, when the fight is won. Then thou shalt dew
My laurels with glad tears. Stay me not now.

LADY C. Bear to the fight thy mother's blessing, boy,
Her proud and joyful blessing, not her tears.
Thou art the last of all my children, Angelo,
Dearest and last. Unkindness never came
Betwixt us twain save once. But, had I sons
As many and as brave as that old queen
Who mourned her Troy in ashes, I would peril
Each several warrior in this cause as freely
As thou, my one fair boy. Now speed thee forth,
To conquest or to death. Why lingerest thou,
My Angelo?

ANG. Mother!

LADY C. What wouldst thou?

ANG. Claudia!

LADY C. His daughter.

ANG. Poor, poor Claudia! I have left her
Even on our bridal-day. But, if I fall—
Mother!

LADY C. Fie! Fie! his daughter! speed thee forth
To battle!—On brave kinsmen!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

*An Apartment in the Capitol.**Enter RIENZI and CLAUDIA, meeting.*

CLA. Father!

At last I find thee, father!

RIE. Well, my child!

What wouldst thou?

CLA. Nay, I know not. Be the guests
Departed?

RIE. Yes.

CLA. All gone; and wherefore went ye
To the Lateran, dear father? And where loiters—

RIE. Aspic!

CLA. Methought a bridal should be merrier—
Not merrier, but happier. Angelo!RIE. Oh, foulest ingrate! when I wed thy mother—
Oh, fiend accurs'd!CLA. Nay, nay,—perchance he's gone
To crave his mother's blessing. Is't not strange
That I should love so well who loves not me?
But I have felt a yearning of the heart
Toward that majestic lady, which hath reached
Almost to painfulness. If I should kneel
Before her and implore her grace—RIE. Thou'dst find
Such welcome as the mountain cat might yield
To the dappled fawn; such greeting as the wolf
To the curled lamb.CLA. Oh! she would love me, father,
Even for the prideful love of Angelo,
That woke her hatred first. A mother joys
To tell fond legends of her children: who,
Like me, would listen, with unwearied ear,

To tales of Angelo, and call for more ;
And, when her store was ended, cry " Again !"
And every day, and all day long, be fed
With praise of that dear name ? Why dost thou groan ?

RIE. A scorpion stung me.

CLA. Kill it father, kill it,
Before it sting again.

RIE. Alas, alas !

I'll think of him no more.

Enter CAMILLO, followed by ALBERTI.

Camillo, speak !

Thy breathless speed and pallid cheeks have told
A world of news already. Quick, Alberti !
Thy tidings, man, thy tidings !

ALB. Good my lord,
Rome is begirt with foes. The barons lead
Their vassals ; every palace voids a horde
Of armed retainers.

RIE. By Our Lady's name,
I have not heard so glad a sound, since that
Which hailed me Tribune of the people ! What !
These masking murderers turned to warrior knights !
Their mine of treason sprung ! Now we shall work
In daylight. Toll the bell ! Summon the guards !—
Sweet, to thy chamber !

[To CLAUDIA.]

CLA. Angelo !

ALB. He leads
The rebel force.

CLA. Thou liest !

ALB. I would I did.

CLA. Thou liest ! He is no rebel. Whom he leads,
Are friends to aid the Tribune. Be they not,
Camillo ? Speak, old man. Be they not friends ?

CAM. Alas ! sweet lady.

CLA. Go not forth, dear father !

They lie, be sure they lie, yet go not forth !

Stay here with me ! Avoid him ! Stay with me !

Leave me not here alone !

RIE. Peace, peace !

CLA. I'll meet him.

Armed or unarmed, as friend or foe, I'll fly

To meet Lord Angelo. I am his wife,

His own true wife.

[*Exit.*]

RIE. Entice her to her chamber,

And watch that she escapes not.

[*Exit CAMILLO.*]

Now, good captain,

Let the great bell, with loud and hasty tongue,

Summon the people, and the trumpet-sound

Collect the scattered guard. Be they all faithful ?

ALB. I'll answer for them with my life.

RIE. What, ho !

My armour ! See that Saladin be barbed

Complete in mail. By Heaven, there is a joy

In fronting these proud nobles, they who deem

Man valiant by descent.

ALB. Shall we not send

To guard the city gates ?

RIE. To fling them wide !

Let the weak timid hare and wily fox

Fence their dank earthy holes, the lion's den

Is open. We will fight for Rome and freedom,

Here in Rome's very streets, beside the hearths

Of the freed citizens, the household gods

Worshipped in every faith. Fling wide the gates !

I'll follow on the instant. Ho, my armour !

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Capitol.

RIENZI seated at a Table.—CAMILLO and ALBERTI discovered
in the front.

ALB. My Lord Rienzi. [RIENZI motions them to be silent.

CAM. See, he waves thee off :

Trouble him not, Alberti—he is chafed,
Moody, and fierce, as though this victory,
Which drove the noble mutineers before ye,
As stag-hounds chase a herd of deer, had ended
In blank defeat.

ALB. The Tribune bore him bravely
And we are victors. Yet the storm is hush'd,
Not spent. When, after this wild night of war,
The sun arose, he showed a troubled scene
Of death and disarray ; a doubtful flight,
A wavering triumph. Even at the gate
Savelli re-collects his scattered band ;
The people falter ; and the soldiery
Mutter low curses as they fight, and yearn

For their old leaders. Victors though we be,
The Tribune totters. His hot pride—yet, sooth,
He bore him gallantly. Beneath his sword
Fell the dark plotter, Ursini.

CAM. How fared
The bold Colonna?

ALB. The old valiant chief,
With many a younger pillar of that high
And honoured house, lies dead.

CAM. And Angelo?

ALB. A prisoner. As he knelt beside the corse
Of his brave father, without word or blow,
As easily as an o'er-wearied child,
We seized him.

CAM. Lo! The Tribune!

RIE. [*Rising and advancing.*] Now admit
Your prisoners; we would see them. Thou, Camillo,
Summon the headsman, and prepare the court
For sudden execution.

ALB. [*Turning back.*] If a true
And faithful servant of the good estate,
If thine old friend, great Tribune—

RIE. Hark ye, sir!

The difficult duty of supreme command
Rests on my head. Obedience is thy light
And easy task,—obedience swift and blind,
As yonder sword, death's sharp-edged instrument,
My faithful servant, an' thou wilt, my friend,
Owes to this strong right hand.

Look that the headsman

Be ready presently. The prisoners!

[*Exeunt ALBERTI and CAMILLO.*]

Ay,

Even this poor simple remnant of the wars

Can read their fickle purpose. Abject changelings !
Base huggers of their chains ! Methought, to-day
These Roman Helots would have crouch'd i' the dust
At sound of their old masters' whips. I have been
Too easy with the slaves. Terror, not love,
Strikes anchor in ignoble souls. These prisoners—
Why could they not have died, as die they shall ?
Was there no lance, no soldier's glorious way
To let out life, but they must wait the slow
And shameful axe ? Yet Angelo—

*Enter ALBERTI, with ANGELO, FRANGIPANI, CAFARELLO, and
other Lords—Prisoners guarded.*

ALB. My lord,
The prisoners !

RIE. Bring them to the light. The prisoners !
The noble prisoners ! I have seen ye, sirs,
Before, at Claudia's bridal, you, and you,
The Frangipani, and the Ursini,
Ay, and the high Colonna : my allies,
My friends, my subjects ; ye who swore to me
Allegiance at the altar ; ye for whom
One harlot sin is not enough, who pile,
Adulterate in crime, treason on murder,
And perjury on treason ! Hence ! begone !
Ye know your doom.

FRA. And fear it not.

RIE. To death !

To instant death. Hold ! here is one. Lord Angelo,
How shall I call thee, son or traitor ?

ANG. Foe.

I know no father, save the valiant dead
Who lies behind a rampart of his slain
In warlike rest. I bend before no king,

Save the dread Majesty of Heaven. Thy foe,
Thy mortal foe, Rienzi.

RIE. Well ! my foe.

Thou hast seen me fling a pardon free as air,
To foemen crouching at my feet ; hast seen
The treachery that paid me. I have lost
My faith in man's bold eye, his earnest voice,
The keen grasp of his hand, the speech where truth
Seems gushing in each ardent word. I have known
So many false, that, as a mariner
Escaped from shipwreck, in the summer sea,
Sparkling with gentle life, sees but the rocks
On which his vessel struck, so I, in the bright
And most majestic face of man, can read
Nought but a smiling treason. Yet thou, Angelo,
Thou art not all a lie ! If I should trust—

ANG. Sir, I shall not deceive thee. Mark, Rienzi !
If thou release me—'tis the thought that works
Even now within thy brain—before yon sun
Reach the hot west, the war-cry of Colonna
Shall sweep once more thy streets. Then, stern revenge,
Or smiling death.

RIE. Madman !

ANG. Wouldst have me live,
Thou who hast levelled to the earth the pride
Of my old princely race ? My kinsmen lie
Scattered and fallen in the highway ; and he,
The stateliest pillar of our house, my father,
Stephen Colonna—oh ! the very name,
The bright ancestral name, which as a star
Pointed to glory, fell into eclipse
When my brave father died !

RIE. I spared him once ;
Spared for a second treason. And again—

ANG. Sir, he is dead. If thou wouldst show me grace,
Lay me beside him in the grave.

RIE. And Claudia—
Thy virgin bride!

ANG. Alas! alas, for thee,
Sweet wife! Yet thou art pure as the white clouds
That sail around the moon; thy home is heaven;
There we shall meet again; here we are parted
For ever.

RIE. Wherefore?

ANG. She is thy daughter.

RIE. Boy!
Proud abject minion of a name, a sound,
Think'st thou to beard me thus! thou hast thy will.
Away with them! Dost hear me, dallying slave?
Off with the prisoners!

ALB. All, my lord?

RIE. With all.

ANG. For this I thank thee. Bear one fond farewell
To Claudia. Tell her, that my latest prayer
Shall blend her name with mine. For thee, Rienzi,
Tremble! a tyrant's rule is brief.

[*Exeunt* ALBERTI, ANGELO, &c.]

RIE. [*Rises and advances.*] They are gone,
And my heart's lightened. How the traitor stood
Looking me down with his proud eye, disdaining
Fair mercy, making of the hideous block
An altar, of unnatural ghastly death
A god. He hath his will; and I—my heart
Is tranquil.

CLA. [*Without.*] Father! father!

RIE. Guard the door!

Be sure ye give not way.

CLA. [*Without.*] Father!

RIE. To see
Her looks ! her tears !

Enter CLAUDIA, hastily.

CLA. Who dares to stop me ? Father !

[Rushes into the arms of RIENZI.]

RIE. I bade ye guard the entrance.

CLA. Against me !

Ye must have men and gates of steel, to bar
Claudia from her dear father. Where is he ?
They said that he was with you—he—thou know'st
Whom I would say. I heard ye loud. I thought
I heard ye ; but, perchance, the dizzying throb
Of my poor temples—Where is he ? I see
No corse—an' he were dead Oh, no, no, no !
Thou couldst not, wouldst not ! Say he lives.

RIE. As yet
He lives.

CLA. Oh ! blessings on thy heart, dear father !
Blessings on thy kind heart ! When shall I see him ?
Is he in prison ? Fear hath made me weak,
And wordless as a child. Oh ! send for him.
Thou hast pardoned him ;—didst thou not say but now
Thou hadst pardoned him ?

RIE. No.

CLA. Oh, thou hast ! thou hast !
This is the dalliance thou wast wont to hold
When I have craved some girlish boon, a bird,
A flower, a moonlight walk ; but now I ask thee
Life, more than life. Thou hast pardoned him ?

RIE. My Claudia !

CLA. Ay ! I am thine own Claudia, whose first word
Was father. These are the same hands that clung
Around thy knees, a tottering babe ; the lips

That, ere they had learnt speech, would smile, and seek
To meet thee with an infant's kiss ; the eyes
Thou hast called so like my mother's ; eyes, that never
Gazed on thee, but with looks of love. Oh, pardon !
Nay, father, speak not yet : thy brows are knit
Into a sternness. Pr'ythee, speak not yet !

RIE. This traitor—

CLA. Call him as thou wilt, but pardon !
Oh, pardon !

RIE. He defies me.

CLA. See, I kneel,
And he shall kneel, shall kiss thy feet ; wilt pardon ?

RIE. Mine own dear Claudia.

CLA. Pardon !

RIE. Raise thee up ;
Rest on my bosom ; let thy beating heart
Lie upon mine ; so shall the mutual pang
Be stilled. Oh ! that thy father's soul could bear
This grief for thee, my sweet one ! Oh, forgive—

CLA. Forgive thee what ? 'Tis so the headsman speaks
To his poor victim, ere he strikes. Do fathers
Make widows of their children ? send them down
To the cold grave heart-broken ? Tell me not
Of fathers,—I have none ! All else that breathes
Hath known that natural love : the wolf is kind
To her vile cubs ; the little wren hath care
For each small youngling of her brood ; and thou—
The word that widowed, orphaned me ? Henceforth
My home shall be his grave. And yet thou canst not—
Father !

[Rushing into RIENZI's arms.]

RIE. Ay !

Dost call me father once again, my Claudia,
Mine own sweet child !

CLA. Oh, father, pardon him !

Oh, pardon! pardon! 'Tis my life I ask
In his. Our lives, dear father!

RIE. Ho, Camillo!

Where loiters he!

[Enter CAMILLO.]

Camillo, take my ring;

Fly to the captain of the guard, Alberti;

Bid him release Lord Angelo.

CLA. Now bless thee,

Bless thee, my father!

RIE. Fly, Camillo, fly!

Why loiterest thou?

CAM. The ring.

[RIENZI gives the ring to CAMILLO—Exit CAMILLO.]

CLA. Give me the ring.

Whose speed may match with mine? Let me be first
To speak those gracious words of pardon.

RIE. No!

That were no place for thee.

CLA. I should see nought

But him! whilst old Camillo—Oh, I hear

His weary footfall still! I should have been

In Angelo's arms ere now. [Bell sounds.] Hark! hark!
the bell!

RIE. It is the bell that thou so oft has heard
Summoning the band of liberty—the bell
That pealed its loud triumphant note, and raised
Its mighty voice with such a mastery
Of glorious power, as if the spirit of sound
That dwells in the viewless wind, and walks the waves
Of the chafed sea, and rules the thunder-cloud
Had shrouded him in that small orb, to spread
Tidings of freedom to the nations. Now
It tells of present peril.

CLA. Say of death.

Oh, father! every stroke thrills through my veins,
Swaying the inmost pulses of my heart
As swings the deep vibration. 'Tis his knell.

RIE. My child,
Have I not said that he shall live?

CLA. Then stop
That bell. The dismal noise beats on me, father,
As from a thousand echoes; mixed with groans,
And shrieks, and moanings in the air? Dost hear them?
Dost hear, again? Be those screams real, father?
Or of the gibbering concerts that salute
The newly mad?

RIE. Be calmer, sweet. I heard
A shriek, a woman's shriek. Calm thee, my child.

Enter LADY COLONNA.

LADY C. He's dead. He's dead!

RIE. It is her husband, Claudia;
Stephen Colonna.

LADY C. Murderer, 'tis my son.

[CLAUDIA *sinks at her father's feet.*

My husband died in honour'd fight; for him
I weep not.

RIE. Angelo is pardoned, Claudia.

LADY C. He is dead. I saw the axe, fearfully bright,
Wave o'er his neck with an edgy shine that cut
My burning eye-balls; saw the butcher-stroke
And the hot blood gush like a fountain high,
From out the veins; and then I heard a voice
Cry pardon! heard a shout that chorussed pardon!
Pardon! to that disjoined corse! Oh, deep
And horrible mockery! So the fiends shall chant
Round thy tormented soul, and pardon, pardon,
Ring through the depths of hell.

RIE. Claudia, my sweet one,
Look up—speak to me! Writhe not thus, my Claudia,
Shivering about my feet.

LADY C. Claudia Colonna!
They say that grief is proud; but I will own thee
Now, my fair daughter. Rouse thee! Help me curse
Him who hath slain thy husband.

RIE. Woman, fiend,
Thou kill'st my child,—avaunt!

LADY C. When I have said
My errand. Think'st thou I came here to crush
Yon feeble worm? Thou hast done that! She loved
him,

Fair faithful wretch, and thou—Why, I could laugh
At such a vengeance! Thy keen axe, that hewed
My column to the earth, struck down the weed
That crept around its base.

RIE. Claudia! she moves!
She is not dead.

LADY C. Dead! Why the dead are bless'd,
And she is blasted. Dead! the dead lie down
In peace, and she shall pine a living ghost
About thee, with pale looks and patient love,
And bitter gusts of anguish, that shall cross
The gentle spirit, when poor Angelo—
A widow's and a childless mother's curse
Rest on thy head, Rienzi! Live, till Rome
Hurl thee from thy proud seat; live but to prove
The ecstasy of scorn, the fierce contempt
That wait the tyrant fallen; then die, borne down
By mighty justice! die as a wild beast
Before the hunters! die, and leave a name
Portentous, bloody, brief, a meteor name,
Obscurely bad, or madly bright! My curse

Rest on thy head, Rienzi.

RIE. Help! Camillo!

Enter CAMILLO.

RIE. I know thou wast too late. Bring aid.—See! see!
Her lips are colouring fast—she is not dead.
Bring aid.

CAM. My lord, Savelli, with a power
Gathering in every street, comes on; the guards
Flee, and the people hear the bell, nor flock
To aid or rescue.

LADY C. Now, revenge! revenge!
Savelli! Murderer, when next we meet,
Thou shalt give blood for blood. [Exit.

RIE. She lives! Aid! aid!
Her pulses beat again. Go, call her maids!
Speed thee, Camillo! [Exit CAMILLO.
How shall I endure

The unspoken curses of her eye: how bear
Her voice! My child! my child! my beautiful—
Whom I so loved! whom I have murdered! Claudia,
Mine own beloved child! She would have given
Her life for mine. Would I were dead!

*Re-enter CAMILLO, with Ladies and Attendants, who bear off
CLAUDIA from her Father.*

CAM. My lord—

RIE. Camillo, when I'm gone, be faithful to her,
Be very faithful! Save her, shield her, better
Than I, that was her father. She'll not trouble thee
Long, good Camillo; the sure poison, grief,
Rankles in those young veins. Yet cherish her,
She loved thee.

CAM. My dear master—thou thyself—

RIE. My business is to die. Watch o'er my child ;
And, soon as I am dead, conduct her safely
To the small nunnery of the Ursulines,
Her pious steps so often sought.—Away !

[Exit CAMILLO.]

She will not curse me dead. She'll pray for me,
In that poor broken heart. Oh, blessings on thee,
My child ! mine own sweet child !

Enter ALBERTI.

ALB. My lord, Savelli
Comes on apace.

RIE. Summon the people.

ALB. They, too,
Advance against thee.

RIE. And for such I left
The assured condition of my lowliness,
The laughing days, the peaceful nights, the joys,
Of a small quiet home ; for such I risked
Thy peace, my daughter ! Abject, crouching slaves !
False, fickle, treacherous, perjured slaves ! How come they ?
How led, how armed, how number'd ?

ALB. They sweep on,
A thickening cloud, as locusts, when they light
On the green banks of Nile. The furious mother
Leads them, and saints revenge, in her fierce prayers
And frantic imprecations.

RIE. 'Tis the fiend
That speediest answers to the daring call
Of his mad worshippers. So be it.

ALB. Some mingle with their shouts the name
Of mighty liberty.

RIE. Oh, had I laid

All earthly passion, pride, and pomp, and power,
And high ambition, and hot lust of rule,
Like sacrificial fruits, upon the altar
Of Liberty, divinest Liberty!
Then—but the dream that filled my soul was vast
As his whose mad ambition thinned the ranks
Of the Seraphim, and peopled hell. These slaves!
Base crawling reptiles! May the curse of chains
Cling to them ever. Seek the court, Alberti,
Dismiss the guard, unbar the gates.—I'll seek
The people.

ALB. Singly!

RIE. Singly, sir.

[*Exeunt ALBERTI and RIENZI.*]

SCENE II.

Before the gates of the Capitol.

Enter LADY COLONNA, SAVELLI, Soldiers and Citizens.

LADY C. Come on! Why loiter ye? Ye that have sons,
Ye that have known a mother's love, come on;
A woman leads to vengeance.

FIRST CIT. Say, to justice.

SAV. Look, look, the gates are barred. The Tribune
means

To stand a desperate siege. Bring axes, sirs,
And fire. Consume the palace! hew the doors!
Bring torches!

LADY C. Ah, with mine own hand I'll light
The accursed and murderous den; thy funeral pyre,
My Angelo.

SAV. Bring torches! hew the gates!

CITIZENS. Down with the tyrant! drag him forth!—

Rienzi! [*The gates are opened—RIENZI appears.*]

RIE. Who calls upon Rienzi? Citizens,
What seek ye of your Tribune?

LADY C. Give me back

My son.

RIE. Oh, that grim Death would give him back
To Claudia! But the cold, cold grave—Why come ye?

SECOND CIT. For vengeance, perjured tyrant! for thy blood!
For liberty!

RIE. For liberty! Go seek
The mountain tops, where with the crashing pines
The north wind revels! Go where ocean pours
O'er horrid rocks, or sports in eddying pools!
Go where the eagle and the sea-snake dwell,
Midst mighty elements, where nature is,
And man is not, and ye may see afar,
Impalpable as a rainbow on the clouds,
The glorious vision! Liberty! I dream'd
Of such a goddess once; dreamed that yon slaves
Were Romans, such as ruled the world, and I
Their Tribune;—vain and idle dream! Take back
The symbol and the power. What seek ye more?

FIRST CIT. Tyrant! thy life!

RIE. Come on. Why pause ye, cowards?
I am unarmed. My breast is bare. Why pause ye?

Enter CLAUDIA, through the gate, and rushes forward to

RIENZI.

CLA. Father!

SAV. Oh, save her!

RIE. Drag her from my neck,
If ye be men! Save her! She never harmed

A worm. My Claudia, bless thee! bless thee! Now!
Now!

[RIENZI falls, pierced by many spears, and the people divide,
leaving CLAUDIA stretched on her father's body.]

SAV. Ay, that thrust pierced to the heart; he dies
Even whilst I speak.

CLA. Father!

LADY C. Alas! poor child!

SAV. She bleeds, I fear, to death. Go bear her in;
And treat the corse with reverence; for surely,
Though stained with much ambition, he was one
Of the earth's great spirits.

F O S C A R I :

A TRAGEDY.

In Five Acts.

THE subject of the following Play is taken from a domestic tragedy in the history of Venice, and was suggested to the Authoress by an interesting narrative of that event in Dr. Moore's Travels. It is scarcely, perhaps, necessary to say here in prose, what the Prologue repeats in verse, that her piece was not only completed, but actually accepted at Covent Garden Theatre, before the publication of Lord Byron's well-known drama.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>Foscari, Doge of Venice</i>	...	...	...	...	Mr. Young.
<i>Francesco Foscari, his Son</i>	...	...	...	...	Mr. Ch. Kemble.
<i>Count Erizzo</i>	}	<i>Venetian Senators</i>			Mr. Warde.
<i>Count Zeno</i>					Mr. Horrebrow.
<i>Donato</i>					Mr. Egerton.
<i>Cosmo, Donato's Son</i>	...	...	...	...	Mr. Serle.
<i>Celso, a follower of Count Erizzo</i>	...	...	...	...	Mr. Fitzharris.

Senators, Jailors, Officers, and Gentlemen.

<i>Camilla, Donato's Daughter</i>	...	...	...	Mrs. Sloman.
<i>Laura, his Niece</i>	...	...	...	Miss Henry.

Ladies.

SCENE—Venice.

FIRST PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN, NOVEMBER, 1826.

PROLOGUE.

SPOKEN BY MR. SERLE.

FOR riches famed of yore, and once as free
As her own element, the bounding sea,
Fair Venice now, fall'n from her palmy state,
Broods o'er her palace-city desolate;
Each mart deserted, each Palladian hall
Vacant and ruinous proclaims her fall.
Yet still one triumph of her ancient fame
Gilds her decay, and lingers round her name;
'Tis that beneath the proud Venetian dome
The Tragic Muse hath fixed her favourite home;
'Tis that her very name bids young hearts glow
With deep remembrance of some glorious woe.
There Shylock whetted his relentless knife;
There poor Othello won his murdered wife;
There Pierre, stout traitor, the awed State defied;
There Jaffier lov'd, and Belvidera died.
And there the immortal Bard, who all too soon
Fell in the blaze of Fame's effulgent noon,

Lamented Byron ! twice a tale hath told
Of princely anguish in the days of old :
How 'gainst the Senate Faliero fired
With vengeful hate by their stern doom expired ;
And *his* severer fate, condemned to try
His guiltless son, the good Doge Foscari.
That tale of woe, but with an humbler flight
And weaker wing, our Authoress of to-night
Hath brought before ye. Deem not of it worse
That 'tis a theme made sacred by his verse.
Ere his bold Tragedy burst into day,
Her trembling hand had closed this woman's play. .
A different track she follows—Oh ! forgive
Her errors ye, who bid the Drama live !
To your indulgence she commends her cause,
And hopes, yet dares not claim, your kind applause.

F O S C A R I.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

St. Mark's Place.

COUNT ERIZZO *and* CELSO *meeting* DONATO.

DON. Good-morrow, Count Erizzo, you are early.
Are you bound to the Palace?

ERIZ. Ay, Donato,
The common destination ; but I go
With an old friend.

Don. What, Celso, thou turned courtier !

CEL. I am a suitor to his Highness, Sir,
With Count Erizzo's aid.

DON. What is your suit?

ERIZ. One of the procurators died last night ;
And honest Celso here would fain succeed
To that good office.

DON. None more capable.
You will not fail.

ERIZ. Scarcely, I think ;—and yet
I hardly know. The old Doge likes me not :
There have been murmurs in the senate, cousin,
At these long wasting wars ; and he, I hear,
Suspects me. I have doubts. From thee, indeed,
One word—

DON. It shall be said. Give me the paper.
Yes, at one word from me—the Doge and I
Are friends, old friends, the friends of forty years ;
Besides we have a pair of hopeful sons,
Friends from the cradle upwards.

ERIZ. And those friends
May soon be brothers. Will not thy Camilla
Be Foscari's bride, when his rough mistress War
Shall loose him from her arms ?

DON. Ay ; he'll return
Too soon, whene'er he comes, to steal away
My age's darling. Yet is he a boy
Full of high thoughts, a noble, princely boy,
Kindly and generous ; one that may deserve
Even her.—Well, give me this petition, Count.
Look on the post as certain.

[Exit.]

CEL. How can I
Repay—He's gone. Think'st thou he will succeed ?

ERIZ. I know not. Either way works well for us.
If he succeed, then will our party gain
A firmer foot in Venice ; if he fail,
We gain Donato.

CEL. Say'st thou so ?

ERIZ. I know him.
He's of a temper kind, and quick, and warm ;
A powerful partizan, but easily sway'd
By flattery or anger. Of such tools
Are Faction's ranks composed, not officered.

Celso, we'll have this Doge unbonneted,
This Doge who wears his load of four-score years
Easier than I my forty. He contemns
Me and my brother nobles; he may learn
To know and fear our power. I tell thee, Sir,
These brows of mine do ache for that same bonnet,
And ere this day be ended—

CEL. 'Tis, my Lord,
A golden moment. The young Foscari
Is safe with Sforza in the Milan wars.

ERIZ. Would I were sure of that! This is indeed
The only moment. Celso, I have here,
How intercepted boots not, letters from
Both generals to the Senate. They have gained
A signal victory; Brescia is freed;
And Sforza gives the unshared, unmingled praise
To Foscari. We must unthronè the Doge
Ere this news reach the city; for the people
Adore the Foscari. Faugh! I am weary
Of this good Doge, this venerable Doge,
This popular Doge, this Doge who courts and woos
The noisy rabble, whilst the Senators
He elbows from their seats. And for the son,
With his hot valour and proud lack of pride—
I hate them both. We must not lose an hour;
The people must not hear—

CEL. The Senate hates them.

ERIZ. Ay, but the Senate—

CEL. Well, my Lord, the Senate—

ERIZ. Fy! I am one of them; I must not tell
The secrets of the Council. We are not
So stubborn as we seem; the popular voice
Finds there an echo; and besides, the Doge

Hath friends. Here comes one.

Enter COUNT ZENO.

A fair morning to you,

COUNT ZENO. I have scarcely seen you since
Your lingering sickness. You look cheerily.

ZENO. The air of this new day is sweet and freshening,
And breathes a health into the veins. I trust
You need no renovating; yet to step
From a sick bed and a dark silent room
Into the pure and balmy air of June,
With the bright sun lighting so blue a sky,
And sparkling on the waters; all around
Full of the living noise of trade or mirth,
Air, earth, and sea, all motion—it is like
Returning from the tomb to this fair world
Of life and sunshine! Such delight is well
Worth a sharp fever.

ERIZ. Nevertheless am I
Content with your report. A homelier joy
Suffices me.

ZENO. You are the happier man.
Are you for the palace?

ERIZ. No. We wait a friend.

ZENO. Then I must say good-morrow. I am somewhat
In haste to-day.

ERIZ. Good-morrow, Count. [*Exit ZENO*

That man

Wears in his courtly smile the consciousness
Of his high influence—the prime favourite he!
Did you not see how graciously he stooped
To me his equal, even as he had been
Himself a prince—proud minion!—Doge, beware!

Beware!—Look, look, Donato too hath found
A check! See, how he chafes! See!

Enter DONATO.

DON. Take thy paper!
I am refused. Good-morrow!

ERIZ. Nay, come back.
Can this be possible? Refused! Donato
Refused by Foscari!

DON. I was a fool
To ask;—a double fool to pin my faith
Upon this Doge's ermine.

CEL. I regret
More than my failure the indignity—

DON. Forget it, Sir.—How go these Milan wars?—
I say, Erizzo, could'st thou have believed
The proudest he in Venice would have dared
To treat me with such scorn?

ERIZ. What! did he scorn thee?

DON. He chid me, schooled me, blamed my easy temper,
That lent an ear to every cunning tale,
A voice to every false designing knave.

CEL. Dared he!

DON. And this to me! Why art thou not
Amazed, Erizzo?

ERIZ. No. It but confirms
What I have heard and scarce believed. The Doge
Is grown so old that he forgets his friends.
Men say—it can't be true—and yet men say—

DON. What?

ERIZ. That the Doge repents his son's betrothment
To thy Camilla.

DON. He shall never wed her.
Sir, if this Doge were king of all the earth

He might have found a higher, prouder title
In father to Camilla! They are free.
Camilla's claims shall never interrupt—
What is his project?

ERIZ. Our great enemy,
The Duke of Milan, hath a young, fair daughter,
And she, they say—

DON. Tush! I have seen her, man!
A dark-browed wench, a beetle-browed—no more
To match with my Camilla than that Gondola
With the Bucentaur?—I will back, and tell him
That Foscari is free. Mine own Camilla!
My prattling, pretty one! I'll back and tell him.

ERIZ. No; rather come with me. What I have said
Is hearsay or conjecture; what is certain
Is the misgovernment, the public wrongs
Of this old Foscari, too old to sway
The power of Venice. This is not a place
For such discourse. Come with me to my palace.

DON. I thought he loved my daughter!

CEL. [*Aside.*]

Thou art sure.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment in the Ducal Palace.

The DOGE and COUNT ZENO.

ZENO. Good-morrow to your Highness.

DOGE.

Dearest Zeno,

This is no common pleasure. Thou the latest
Of our late revellers, whom the sun scarce sees
Till half his course be run—

ZENO.

Oh, good my Lord,

I meet him often ere I go to bed,
The bright reproachful tell-tale !

DOGE. To see thee,
But lately risen from a sharp sickness too
Afoot so early ! There must be some cause,
Some kind or pleasant cause—What brings thee, Count ?

ZENO. This letter !

DOGE. No petition for the post
Vacant by poor Venoni's death ?

ZENO. Oh ! no.

DOGE. I should have grieved within one little hour
To say twice No to two dear friends. You met
Donato ?

ZENO. Yes, so chafed he saw me not.
Your Highness knows his temper.

DOGE. And I fear
Tried it too much. He asked of me that office
For a known villain, an unusual compound
Of ruffian and of knave, the follower
Of his kinsman, Count Erizzo.

ZENO. Then the Count
Was waiting for Donato. I am grieved
He should be so companioned.

DOGE. He flung from me
Ere I could tell him that the post was given
To Signor Loredano, a ripe scholar
Pining in penury, at the pressing instance
Of his own son.

ZENO. Cosmo ! How like is that
To his unwearied kindness.

DOGE. There is not,
Unless I may except my Foscari,
A youth in Venice who can vie in aught
With Cosmo.

ZENO. And they are as different
As the bright sun and gentle moon, the sea
In sparkling motion and the quiet land.
The one a stirring, brave, and honest soldier,
The other a pale student.

DOGE. Bless them both
My noble boys! They have always loved like brothers,
And soon I hope my pretty sweet Camilla
Will give them that dear title.

ZENO. Have you had
Tidings of Foscari lately?

DOGE. Not for long,
Longer than common.

ZENO. Last night at St. Mark's
There was a rumour floating—none could trace
Its source—of a great victory obtained
By Foscari and Sforza.

DOGE. Heaven grant it!
Sure we shall hear to-day.—Now, dearest Count,
What is your will? You led the old man on
To talk of his dear children, till in sooth
He had forgotten the whole world. Now say
What is that scroll?

ZENO. My lord—I almost fear—
Dost thou believe in soothsayers?

DOGE. No!—Yes!—
Not much. Why dost thou ask?

ZENO. Wilt thou not answer?

DOGE. Count Zeno, thou art one to whom, being wise,
A wise man may confess the cherished folly
That lurks within his breast. But tell it not
To fools, good Zeno.

ZENO. Then thou dost believe?

DOGE. I have some cause. What! didst thou never hear

Of the old prediction that was verified
When I became the Doge ?

ZENO. An old prediction !

DOGE. Some seventy years ago—it seems to me
As fresh as yesterday—being then a lad
No higher than my hand, idle as an heir,
And all made up of gay and truant sports,
I flew a kite, unmatched in shape or size,
Over the river—we were at our house
Upon the Brenta then ; it soared aloft,
Driven by light vigorous breezes from the sea,
Soared buoyantly, till the diminished toy
Grew smaller than the falcon when she stoops
To dart upon her prey. I sent for cord,
Servant on servant hurrying, till the kite
Shrank to the size of a beetle : still I called
For cord, and sent to summon father, mother,
My little sisters, my old halting nurse,—
I would have had the whole world to survey
Me and my wondrous kite. It still soared on,
And I stood bending back in ecstasy,
My eyes on that small point, clapping my hands,
And shouting, and half envying it the flight
That made it a companion of the stars,
When close beside me a deep voice exclaimed—
Ay, mount ! mount ! mount !—I started back, and saw
A tall and aged woman, one of the wild
Peculiar people whom wild Hungary sends
Roving through every land. She drew her cloak
About her, turned her black eyes up to Heaven,
And thus pursued :—Ay, like his fortunes, mount,
The future Doge of Venice ! And before
For very wonder any one could speak
She disappeared.

ZENO. Strange! Hast thou never seen
That woman since?

DOGE. I never saw her more.
After a slight brief search, the wonder sank
Into a jest. My mother for a while
Called me her pretty Doge, her madcap Doge,
And ran a thousand fondling changes through
On that proud title; and my sisters long
Talked of the tall Hungarian. None believed
Save my old nurse.

ZENO. And thou?

DOGE. Long time in me
The seeds of faith lay dormant; till at last
As youth's gay wildness sobered, and ambition
Grew stronger in my soul, the prophecy
Knocked at my thoughts, and I by fits believed
That which I wished were true. Now for thy scroll;—
Whence comes it?

ZENO. Even such an aged crone,
So tall, so habited, stayed me last night
At my own door, and with an earnest voice,
Her shaking hand prest on my arm, implored
That, as I loved the good Doge Foscari,
I would at his first waking give him this.

DOGE. She must be dead! Full seventy years ago—
And then her locks were grizzled!—She is dead.
And what, at fourscore years, have I to do
With fate or fortune! My long race is run.

ZENO. Read it at least.

DOGE. (*Reads.*) "The ducal bonnet trembles on thy brow,
"Doge of Venice, trembles—and will fall, though the stars
"themselves show me not when. Grant the first boon that
"shall be asked of thee to-morrow, or before the next sun
"rises thy very heart shall be rent in twain."

Grant the first boon! Why, my good Signor Celso,
This is too palpable. Grant the first boon!
Make thee the Procurator! Fy! Fy! Fy!
Erizzo's talent hath forsaken him;
This cheat is shallow. They have heard the tale
I told thee, and this paltry poor device—
Off to the waves and winds!

ZENO. Yet hath the Count
A party in the state; and for Donato,
Kind, hasty, generous and beloved, his power
May vie with thine.

DOGE. But never will be used
Against me, Zeno. I should hate myself
Could I suspect Donato. Count, we'll go
Together to the Senate. Thou shalt see
The quick relenting of his sudden wrath,
His graceful self-rebuke, his honest love.

ZENO. I'll gladly be converted.

DOGE. Doubt him not.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Donato Palace.

CAMILLA and LAURA.

CAM. Laura, hast thou seen Cosmo?

LAU. Not to-day.

CAM. Sure, he'll not cheat us of his early smiles,
His gay good-morrow, that best joy of home
When dear friends meet in morning cheerfulness.

LAU. And such a cheerfulness! and such a smile!
None are like his.

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CAM. None! Hast thou never seen
The heaven of kindness that in Foscari's eyes
Shines under those dark brows? And I'm the sister
Of that dear Cosmo, the selected bride
Of that still dearer Foscari! Oh, cousin,
I am the blessedest creature that e'er trod
This laughing earth! There is but only one
Can hope to be so happy;—thou, perchance,
When Cosmo—

Enter COSMO.

We were speaking of thee.

Cos. Well,
I trust fair maids. My gentle lady Laura,
Say yes to that.

CAM. Feed not man's vanity;
Let not thy blushes answer.

Cos. Sister mine,
'Tis thou art clothed in blushes. Why the dawn
Opening her ardent eyes, and shaking wide
Her golden locks on the Adriatic wave,
The bright Aurora, she is sad and pale
And spiritless compared to thee. Hast thou
Been Psyche's errand? Or hath some fair vision
Lapt thee in loveliness?

CAM. I think I dreamt
Of heaven; for I was in a place where care
And fear and sorrow live not, self-sustained
On wings such as the limner's cunning lends
To the Seraphim, and singing like a bird
From the deep gladness of a merry heart
The whole night long. And when the morning came
And I awakened in this work-day world,

The spell was on me still ; and still is on
The buoyancy, the joy, the certain hope
Of happiness. Brother, are there no news
Of Foscari ?

Cos. None certain. Yet is there
A balminess of hope ; and stirring rumours
Come pattering round us, with a pleasant sound,
Like the large drops before a summer shower.
They talk of Foscari and victory—

CAM. There hath then been a battle. Is he safe ?

Cos. As safe as I myself.

CAM. Fy ! what a fool
Am I to tremble so ! And art thou sure ?

Cos. There is no certainty, but such a hope
As is her forerunner. Hath not my father
Heard of this victory ?

LAU. He hath been long
Gone to the palace, and wished thee to follow.

Cos. Gladly. I have a good man's gratitude
To pay to the good Doge. I must away
Or I shall miss the Senate.

CAM. Thou wilt send
The tidings, Cosmo ?

Cos. Surely.

CAM. Quickly ?

Cos. Yes.

CAM. Good tidings, Cosmo.

Cos. Yes. My pretty cousin,
Hast thou no charge to give ?

LAU. Why bring this tale,
This happy tale thyself.

CAM. Ay, come thyself,
Dear Cosmo, and farewell.

[Exit Cosmo.]

Now, Laura mine,

Let us to the high balcony. I need
Fresh air and sun and sparkling sights and sounds
To help sustain this happiness, this hope,
Which weighs almost like fear. My dearest, come.

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Senate.

COUNT ERIZZO, DONATO, and SENATORS.

ERIZ. He rules us as a king—this Foscari,
An absolute king, haughty and imbecile
As any Eastern sovereign! He degrades
The old nobility, contemns the Senate,
And cringes to the people—a mob courtier!
A greedy swallower of popular praise!

SEN. He hates the nobles.

ERIZ. But this very day
Did he refuse to my dear kinsman here
A post, that he requested for a man
Who long hath served the state.

SEN. Refuse Donato!

ERIZ. Even so. He is of the Senate, is the head
Of an old powerful house, is rich, is noble,
Is nobly loved. Are not these crimes enough
To stir our Doge's wrath?

DON. No more of this!

✓ ERIZ. Then his misgovernment, his tedious wars,
His waste of blood and treasure, that his son,
The idol of the soldiery, may glut
His lust of glorious battle! Senators,
Why should we thus submit to what we hate?
Why bow to whom we made? The Doge is now
Too old for his high office. Good my lords,
Let us resume our power. Is there no brow
In Venice that may bear this ducal crown
Save one? Will it not sit as gracefully
On vigorous manhood's clustering curls? On thine,
Donato? Or Pisani, upon thine?
Or any man of us? Lords, have ye changed
Your purpose? That the Doge may be deposed
Is the fixed law of Venice. Are ye firm?
This is the moment.

SEN. He must be unthroned.

ERIZ. Then be it done to-day.

SECOND SEN. I'll join thee, Count.

THIRD SEN. And I.

ERIZ. Donato, thou wilt best propose—

DON. Oh no! He hath been harsh—but I have loved
him—

We are old friends.

SEN. Do it thyself, Erizzo.

DON. But gently, reverently.

Enter DOGE, COUNT ZENO, and other SENATORS.

DOGE. My gracious lords,
I greet ye well! We are no truants, Sirs,
This full assemblage honours our fair Venice,
Honours her senators. Signor Donato—
Nay shun me not—that post was promised to—
Thou wilt not hear! I have too often borne

With thy infirmity. Forget not, Sir,
That thou'rt my friend, or I must needs remember
That I'm thy prince. Now to our business, lords.

ERIZ. Are there no letters from the army?

DOGE.

None.

But there is through the city a loud bruit
Of victory.

ERIZ. In a well-ordered state,
There is no pause for rumour; certainty
Outspeeds her lying rival.

DOGE. Think'st thou, Count,
That my old heart is quiet in this pause?
Thou hast no boy in yonder battle-field,
Or thou wouldst know how thirstily the soul
Of a father pants in his suspense for truth,
One single drop of sweet or bitter truth.

Enter Cosmo.

Who's that?

SEN. Cosmo Donato, please you, Sir.

DOGE. Oh, our young secretary? Sit by me,
I had just missed thee, Cosmo. Was thy friend
Content?

Cos. Oh, never gratitude was clothed
In such pure joy. I would your Highness saw
The happiness you caused.

DOGE. Hush! Count Erizzo,
You were about to speak.

ERIZ. I was; and yet
I gladly would delay, gladly resign
A painful duty.

DOGE. If it touch me, Sir,
Speak.

ERIZ. Is there not, my lord, a law in Venice,

That if the Doge, by sickness, grief, or age,
Become incapable, he be removed ?

DOGE. There is. Say on.

ERIZ. What need I to say more !

Know we not all the good Doge Foscari
Is turned of fourscore years ? Fitter for him
To lay down the proud bonnet, which doth weigh
So heavily on those white hairs, and pass
In calm, serene repose the evening hours
Of his unsullied life. So shall his sun,
Setting in tranquil beauty, leave a train
Of pure and cloudless light ; so praised and loved
Shall he sink down to rest.

DOGE. This is not all.

On, on, my lord !

ERIZ. Fitter for us a man

Who shall remember in this state of Venice
There is another power great as himself,
And greater than the people. Howsoe'er,
Thou hast the bearing, Doge, of a born prince,
To us, thy subjects, thou art but the head
Of the Venetian nobles. Thy proud rank
Was given by them, thy equals. Each great name
That now surrounds thee hath in turn adorned
Thy splendid office. Not a noble house
But is a link in the resplendent chain
Of old Venetian story. We are born
Lords of the Adriatic ; not a name
But hath been vowed her spouse. Think not such names
Are common sounds ; they have a music in them,
An odorous recollection, they are part
Of the old glorious past. Their country knows
And loves the lofty echo which gives back
The memory of the buried great ; and we

Their sons—Oh, our own names are watchwords to us
That call to valour and to victory,
To goodness and to freedom. This hast thou
Forgotten. Every creeping artizan,
Every hard-handed smoky slave is nearer
To our great Doge than we : to them all smiles
And princely graciousness—to us all frowns
And kingly pride. Fitter for us a Doge
Of a congenial spirit, to preside
Over our councils, and to guard and guide
The Senate and the State.

ZENO.

Perhaps Erizzo

Would deign to wear this care-encompass'd crown ?

Fy! fy!

ERIZ. My voice is for Donato, Sir!

Cos. My father Doge of Venice? Never! Never!
He will not, must not, shall not! All the world
Would join in one reproach; the very stones
Of Venice would cry out; and we, his children—
Oh, we should die of grief and shame! What he
Supplant his friend, his dearest friend! Oh, never!
Father, thou wilt not?

SEN.

Silence!

ERIZ.

Signor Cosmo,

Thou art not yet a senator.

Cos.

My lords,

I pray your pardon; but if I had seen
A venom'd serpent coiling round his limbs
And pressing him within its deadly clasp,
Would ye have blamed the cry that Nature sent?
Thou wilt not be the Doge?

DON.

Never!

Cos.

My father,

Forgive me that I feared. How could I fear!

Forgive me.

DOGE. Noble boy!—Hast thou said all?
That I am old, and that I love the people?
Are these my crimes? Oh, I am doubly guilty!
I love them all, even ye that love me not!
I cannot choose but love ye, for ye are
Venetians, quick, and proud, and sparkling-eyed,
Venetians brave and free. Ye are the lords
Of the bright sea-built city, beautiful
As storied Athens; or the gorgeous pride
Of Rome, eternal Rome; greater than kings
Are ye, Venetian nobles—ye are free;
And that is greatness and nobility,
The source and end of power. That I have made
Liberty common as the common air,
The sun-light, or the rippling waves that wash
Our walls; that every citizen hath been
Free as a senator; that I have ruled
In our fair Venice, as a father rules
In his dear household, nothing intermitting
Of needful discipline, but quenching fear
In an indulgent kindness; these ye call
My crimes. These are my boasts. Yes, I do love
The honest artizans; there's not a face
That smiles up at me with a kindly eye
But sends a warmth into my heart, a glow
Of buoyant youthfulness. Age doth not freeze
Our human sympathies; the sap fails not,
Although the trunk be rugged. Age can feel,
And think, and act. Oh, noble senators,
Ye do mistake my crime. I am too young;
I am not like to die; and they who wait
Wax weary for my seat. I do not dote,
My Lord Erizzo; yet—

[*Shouts without.*]

Foscari! Foscari!

DOGE. What mean those shouts?

Cos. Francesco Foscari!

There lives no other, whom a grateful people
Would greet as with one heart.

Enter FOSCARI.

ZENO. My Lord Francesco!

DOGE. My son, my very son! Now I am young
And great and happy! Now I reign again.
My noblest son!

Fos. Father! Why this is joy
Deeper than victory! Dost feel my heart?

DOGE. Art thou unhurt?

Fos. Untouched. I almost shame
To want one glorious scar. How well he is!
What fire is in his eyes! Cosmo, thou too!—
But I have tidings that the Doge must hear
Upon his throne. High tidings, gracious lords!
My father,—take thy state.

ERIZ. [*Aside.*] Lost! lost! All lost!
Another hour and that most hated boy
Had been most welcome!

Fos. [*To COSMO.*] Still as lovely, Cosmo?
And still as true?

Cos. Yes! Yes!

Fos. Will not the Doge
Assume the accustomed seat?

DOGE. My son, these lords,
These senators, these mighty ones of Venice
Have found thy father old. Hadst thou returned
Some half-hour later, thou hadst seen the throne
Filled by Donato, or his cousin Count.
Which hath thy voice, Francesco?

Fos.

Thou not Doge !

Erizzo climb into thy honoured seat,
Honoured by thee ! Or thou, Donato, thou
Join with this false, ungrateful, heartless Senate,
This shadow and this mockery of wisdom,
To cast aside the best and truest heart
That ever made our Venice rich and proud,
And great and happy, to throw off thy prince
Like an old garment ! Shame ! Thou that didst call
Thyself his friend ! Shame ! shame ! My dearest Cosmo,
This was a grief to thee. Oh, shame ! shame ! shame !

DON. Rated again, and by a boy ! I tell thee
I would not be the Doge.

ZENO.

My Lord Francesco,

Thy tidings.

Fos. Take thy state, Doge Foscari.
From thee did I receive my maiden sword,
From thee my high commission ; to none other
Will I resign them. Senators of Venice !
Ingrates ! I bring ye victory and peace.
Victorious peace ! Brescia is free, and Milan
Sues at your feet for peace. Her haughty Duke
Is Sforza's prisoner,—my prisoner, Doge,
And Sforza weds his heir.

DON.

Ha !

Fos. [*Giving letters to the Doge.*] Eight days hence
He will be here. See what he writes, my lord.
The Senate is amazed ; yet from the field
We sent ye somewhat of this glorious tale.

ERIZ. Those letters reached not Venice.

Fos.

Count Erizzo,

I met the messenger, and staid my horse
To ask him of my father. He had stopt
Short of the palace, but had safely given

The packet to a senator. Erizzo,
Thou wast the man. Look at him, ye that ever
Saw guilt ooze out in shame! Nay, tremble not;
I pardon thee. There is no other vengeance
For low dishonour. It would stain my sword
To dip it in thy blood.

ERIZ. My Lord Francesco,

I yet may find a time—

Fos. I pardon thee.

DOGE. Sforza says here, this Brescian victory
Was gained by thee. Zeno, read there—just there.

Fos. Here is the treaty, Doge, already signed
By Milan, Sforza, and myself: add thou
Thy venerable name, Doge Foscari.
So—having crowned a long and glorious reign
With glorious peace, let me, thy son, pluck off
This envied bonnet from thy honoured head.
Wear it the worthiest! Never will it clip
Within its golden circlet such high thoughts,
Such a brave love of freedom, such a warm
And generous faith in man. Proud lords of Venice,
Ye ne'er deserved him. My good sword, lie there!
I am no more your general. Pass we forth
Together, my dear father, private men—
Rich in the only wealth the world can give,
A spotless name.

DOGE. Richest in thee. Nay, Zeno!

ZENO. Ye must not leave us, lords. Doge, if again
We had to choose, our choice again would fall
On Foscari. Is't not so?

ERIZ. [*Apart to a SEN.*] Sail with the stream—
Foscari!—I'll find a time—

SENATORS. Foscari! Foscari!

DOGE. One still is silent.

Cos. Now, my father, now !
For thy fame's sake.

DON. On Foscari.

Cos. Thanks ! Thanks !

Now dare I look upon that reverend face,
And grasp this hand again.

Fos. Did we not know thee !

DOGE. Senators, countrymen, at your behest
I wear once more the crown.

Fos. Oh, no ! no ! no !

Bear not again that burthen.

DOGE. My Francesco,
Take up thy sword again, thy knightly sword—
I am too proud of thee !—thy stainless sword !
Now, good my lords, our fellow-citizens
Must be made happy in this glorious tale.
First to proclaim the peace ; then, with meek hearts,
Lowlily, with a steadfast thankfulness,
Pour out our homage to the Lord of Peace
In his own temple. This high duty o'er,
I bid ye to the palace ; we must grace
Our soldier with some revelry. Donato,
Thou wilt be there, and Cosmo—will ye not ?
And our Camilla, lady of the feast,
And of the heart. Come to us, dear Donato.

ERIZ. [*Apart to DON.*] Are all his taunts forgotten ?

DON. No ! I cannot.

DOGE. Think better of it. Zeno !—Follow soon
Francesco !—Zeno, is this storm the end
Of our dark prophecy ? [*Exit DOGE, ZENO, and SEN.*]

Fos. Signor Donato,
I have a feeling here of deep old love
That tells me I have wronged thee. If I have,
Forgive me !

Cos. Father, canst thou turn away
When Foscari speaks those words which mortal ear
Ne'er heard him utter?

Fos. If I did mistake,
'Twas in my father's cause; 'twas such a wrong
As Cosmo would have done for thee. Forgive me,
For her dear sake.

ERIZ. [*To DON.*] Remember, "Shame!"

DON. Erizzo,
Think'st thou I can forget! Not even for her.
Stay me not, Cosmo. [*Exit DONATO.*]

Cos. Go, for I can trust
Thy kind heart, father! Love, who is so strong
In gentleness, Love and his bondsman Time
Will conquer anger. We must now submit.
To-morrow—

Fos. Oh! what a long life of love
Must I give up! To-morrow! I am here,
Here in this happy Venice, which she makes
The palace of her beauty, where the air
Is sweetened by her breath, and her young voice
Floats on the breeze like music. I am here—
Divided from her but by envious walls,
Clouds that conceal my sun. Hadst thou but seen
How I urged on my mettled courser's speed,
My matchless Barbary horse, till his pure jet
Was pounced with snowy flakes; or how I strove
To graft my hot impatience on the dull
And sluggish boatmen; or with what a stroke
I cleft the water; or how leapt ashore—

Cos. I can believe 't—

Fos. That I might sooner gain
By one half-hour her presence! And to bear
This longing till to-morrow! Thou must say

An enemy in battle.

Cos. Thou wast wont
To love the people, Foscari.

Fos. I would drain
The last drop in my veins for them and freedom ;
But these loud shouts, this popular acclaim,
This withering, perishing blast of vulgar praise,
Whose noisy echoes do shake off the flush
Of Fame's young blossoms—Oh, I hate them all !
True honour should be silent, spotless, bright,
Enduring ; trembling even at the breath
That woos her beauty.

Cos. Come. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Room in the Erizzo Palace.

COUNT ERIZZO *entering.*

ERIZ. Seek Signor Celso.—Baffled, spurned, contemned,
Pardoned—the insolent ! But he shall feel—
All lost ! For old Donato, shallow fool,
Hath in his anger a relenting spirit
And will yield easy way at the first tear
The fair Camilla sheds—the very first !
She hath but to cry Father, and to hang
About his neck, and his light wrath will melt
Like snowflakes in that rain. How the dull Senate
Cowered at the haughty soldier's feet ! Even I—
Thinks he I too can pardon ! He shall find
My hate immortal. Nothing stands between
Me and the crown but Foscari. To-night—
This Celso, as I have good cause to know,
Can wield a dagger well—to-night he goes

To meet his lady-love—to-night—alone—
I can detain young Cosmo.

Enter CELSO.

Celso, friend,
Thou comest at a wish. Where hast thou been?

CEL. Where I am stunned with shouts of Foscari,
And dazzled with the glare of tinselled gauds
Hung out to honour him. The palaces
Are clothed with tissues, velvets, cloths of gold
And richer tapestry. The canals all strewed
With floating flowers, through which dark gondolas
Dart as through some bright garden. All is lost,
And I must leave dear Venice. Count, farewell!

ERIZ. Why must thou go?

CEL. Ask my hard creditors.

ERIZ. Celso, I have a thousand ducats here
For him that rids me of a clinging plague.

CEL. A thousand ducats!

ERIZ. Hast thou still thy dagger?
In, and I'll tell thee more. This very night!

[Exit.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Donato Palace.

DONATO, CAMILLA, and LAURA.

LAU. Camilla, why so drooping ?

CAM.

This hath been

A long and weary day ; there is a heat,
A gloom, a heavy closeness. See, this rose
Is withering too, that was so fresh and fair—
The white musk-rose—that which he used to love.

LAU. It was no day for Venice. 'Twould have been
A calm sweet stillness in our country home,
Bowered amid green leaves and growing flowers,
With fragrant airs about us, and soft light,
And rustling birds.

DON. The sky portends a storm.
To bed, Camilla !

CAM. Father ! dearest father,
Have I displeased thee ?

DON. No ! To bed ! To bed !
Laura, good night.

[*Exit.*

CAM. He used to call me child,
His dearest child; and when I grasped his hand
Would hold me from him with a long fond gaze,
And stroke my hair and kiss my brow, and bid
Heaven bless his sweet Camilla; And to-night
Nought but to bed! to bed!

LAU. Believe it, cousin,
A thing of accident.

CAM. And Cosmo comes not;
He sends not to me—he that never broke
His plighted word before! And Laura! Laura!
Foscari is in Venice, is returned
Triumphant, and he comes not, sends not, Laura,
And when I ask of him my father frowns
Sternly on his poor child.

Re-enter DONATO.

DON. My pretty one,
I could not go to rest till I had said
Heaven bless thee!

CAM. My dear father!

DON. What is this?
A tear?

CAM. Oh! gratitude, and love, and joy
Are in that tear, dear father!—and one doubt—
One fear—

DON. Sweetest, good night!

CAM. Foscari, father?

DON. To bed, my own Camilla! [*Exit.*]

CAM. Not a word.

LAU. Something works in him deeply.

CAM. Yet how kind,
How exquisitely fond! Cosmo must know,
And, Laura, Cosmo never flies from thee,

And thou may'st ask—

LAU. I will, I will, sweet Coz !
Look, dearest, at the glancing gondolas
Shooting along, each with its little light,
Like stars upon the water. Whither go they ?

CAM. To the proud Ducal Palace, where they hold
High feasting in his honour. There the dance,
And the quaint masque, and music's softer strains
Minister to his praises.

LAU. And the ear
That would drink in so eagerly that sweet praise,
The heart that would leap up at every sound
Rejoicing, the glad eyes—Would thou wert there !

CAM. Ah ! would I were, since Foscari is there ;
That is enough for me ! Where'er he is,
In tent or battle-field—Hark ! what is that ?
That music ? Oh 'tis he ! 'tis Foscari !
Dost thou not know the strain, the wandering strain,
Trembling and floating like a spirit's song,
With many a—Hark again !—'Tis he ! 'tis he !
That air belongs to him even as a name ;
It thrills my very heart. Am I not pale ?

LAU. No ; the bright blood floats trembling in thy cheek,
Most like that wandering music.

CAM. There is pain
In this excess of joy

LAU. He comes.

Enter FOSCARI.

Fos. Camilla !
Sweetest Camilla !

CAM. Thou art come at last
Francesco !

Fos. My Camilla—Come at last !

Why is this chiding ! Canst thou chide, Camilla ?

Lau. Ay, or she were no woman.

Fos. Lady Laura !

Forgive me that I saw thee not. Camilla,

Chide on—nay, thou art smiling—Come begin !

I'd rather hear thy chidings than the praise

Of all the world beside. Let me but hear

Thy voice, whate'er thou speakest.

Cam. Dear Francesco,

Thou hast been long away.

Fos. Oh, very long !

Cam. And where ?

Fos. Away from thee. That is enough ;

Where thou art not I keep no count of place,

Nor time, nor speech, nor act.

Cam. Yet tell me where.

Fos. Where I have dreamt of courts and camps and fields

Of glorious battle. A long weary dream

To him, who loves to bask him in thy smiles,

And live upon thy words.

Cam. Yet hast thou lost

Ten weary hours to-day.

Fos. Why this, indeed,

Is chiding, my Camilla. I have been

At the Palace, at the Senate Hall, at Church,

Have undergone a grand procession, love,

And a long dreary feast.

Cam. And is that all ?

Fos. And is not that enough ? Would'st thou crowd in
More tediousness ? Oh, thou unmerciful !

Cam. But why not first—sure he is thinner, Laura,
Thinner and paler ?

Lau. Nay, he is the same.

Cam. Why not first come to me ?

Fos.

To visit my heart's treasure by that light
When misers seek their buried hoards ; to steal
Upon the loved one, like a mermaid's song,
Unseen and floating between sea and sky ;
To creep upon her in love's loveliest hour,
Not in her daylight beauty with the glare
Of the bright sun around her, but thus pure
And white and delicate, under the cool moon
Or lamp of alabaster. Thus I love
To think of thee, Camilla ; thus with flowers
About thee and fresh air, and such a light,
And such a stillness ; thus I dream of thee,
Sleeping or waking.

CAM. Dost thou dream of me?

Fos. Do I ! without that lovely mockery,
That sweet unreal joy, how could I live
When we are parted ? Do I dream of thee !
Dearest, what ails thee ? Thou art not to-night
As thou art wont, thine eyes avoid my gaze,
Thy white hand trembles and turns cold in mine.
What ails thee, dearest ? Hast thou heard—What fear
Disturbs thee thus. Camilla ?

CAM. I will tell thee.
Cosmo is absent ; my dear father grieved ;
There is high feasting in thy princely home
And I not there ; and thou not here till now,
At midnight, when my father sleeps, and Cosmo
Is still away. Are ye all friends ? Say Foscari,
The very truth.

Fos. Well! Thou shalt hear the truth.
Cheer thee! 'Tis nought to weep for. At the Senate
There were to-day some hasty words. Erizzo,
Thy subtle kinsman, he was most to blame—

I was too hot, too rash ; but I implored
Donato's pardon, and am half forgiven ;
Though yielding to the crafty Count, he shunned
To sup with us to-night.

CAM. Ah ! I had feared—

Fos. There is no cause for fear. This sudden storm
Is but a July shower that sweeps away
The o'erblown roses. Cosmo is our friend,
Our truest warmest friend ; and well thou know'st
Thy father's kindly heart ; he loves thee so ;
Ay, and he loves me too ; and he shall love me
Better than ever.

LAU. He shall love ! Lord Foscari,
Thou'rt a true soldier. Wilt thou conquer love ?

Fos. Surely.

LAU. And how ?

Fos. By love and gratitude,
And deep respect, and true observance, Laura.
Shake not thy head, Camilla. He shall love me.
What ! is he not thy father ? Smile on me.
Think'st thou that if I feared to lose thee, I
Should be thus tranquil ?

[Exit LAURA.]

CAM. No. But at my heart
There is a heavy sense of coming pain,
A deep and sad foreboding.

Fos. Thou hast been
Vexed to-day, sweetest, and thy weary thoughts
Tinge the bright future with the gloomy past.

CAM. Well, be it so. And yet I would to heaven
That this one night were over !—Where is Laura ?

Fos. She glided off, with a kind parting smile,
And a quick sparkle in her eye, that said
Ye will not miss me !

CAM. Ay, her merry glance ;
But we do miss her. 'Twas a saucy thought,
My pretty gentle Laura !

Fos. She is grown.

CAM. Yes, tall and beautiful and rarely good.
Oh 'tis the kindest heart ! We think she'll make—
What is that noise ?

Fos. Nothing. A distant door.
What startles thee, Camilla ?

CAM. My own heart.
Hark how it beats, painfully, fearfully !
Hush ! hush ! Again that noise !

Fos. 'Tis thunder, love,
And that hath stirred thy spirits. Cheer thee, dearest ;
A soldier's wife should be as brave as steel.
What didst thou say of Laura ?

CAM. She will make
A sweet wife for our Cosmo.

Fos. And doth he
Love the young beauty ?

CAM. He hath scarce forgot
To treat her as a child, the dearest child,
The loveliest and the gentlest,—but a child.
Francesco, thou must praise her—Ha ! again !
That is no thunder-clap. My father's door—
Oh go ! go ! go !

Fos. My dear Camilla, no !
Thou canst not fear me, I will be as calm,
As humble—

CAM. Go ! go ! go ! I die with fear ;—
He is so rash, so sudden ;—He will kill thee !

Fos. Here ! under his own roof ! In thy dear sight !
Thy own dear father !

CAM. He will part us, Foscari !

Go !

FOS. Well, I go. But my Camilla—

CAM. Go !

FOS. Dearest, farewell !

CAM. Not that way !— That ! there ! there !

Leap from the window in the corridor,

From the low balcony !

FOS. Farewell ! [Exit.]

CAM. I'm glad

That he is gone. Fear hath so mastered me

I stumble on the level floor. Thank Heaven

They are both safe, my dearest Foscari,

My dearest father ! There's no danger now ;

And yet the night grows wilder. What a flash !

And I have sent him forth into the storm,

I, that so love him ! I have sent him forth

Into this awful storm ! Protect him, Heaven !

I thought I heard the window—Can those steps

Be his ?

DON. (*Without.*) Help ! help ! base traitor ! Foscari !
Murder !

Enter LAURA.

LAU. What's that ?

CAM. Undo the door—I cannot—

Undo the door ! My father ! *Exeunt.*

LAU. (*Behind the scenes.*) Who hath done
This horrible deed ?

CAM. (*Behind the scenes.*) My father ! murder ! murder !

SCENE II.

An illuminated Hall in the Ducal Palace.

DOGE, COUNT ZENO, *Ladies and Gentlemen.*

DOGE. Now for some stirring air to wake the spirits
Of mirth and motion. Sweet ones, to the dance!
Where is this Foscari? Gentles, in my youth
He had been held a recreant that forsook
The revel, and the light of ladies' eyes,
And play of twinkling feet. Degenerate boy!

GENT. Degenerate days! Ah! we could tell such tales
Of the deep merriment, the gorgeous banquets,
The high festivity of our old time!
Thou may'st smile, Zeno, but his Highness knows
Bright mirth is on the wane. Our puny sons
Show but faint flashes of their father's fire.

ZENO. Believe him not, fair maids! 'Tis but the vaunt
Of vaunting age. Believe him not. Why, Moro,
Thy father in those mirthful days hath said
The same to thee, and his to him; yet still
'Tis merry Venice. Forty years to come
We, too, may boast us of our jovial prime,
Nor yet the world grow sadder. Fear it not.
His Highness will not join thee, Signor Moro;
He is too youthful-hearted.

DOGE. What a bribe
Is that to aid thy cause! But Moro's right;
We were fine gallants. Niece, I prythee see
That all are welcomed. Where's thy sister, Julio?

2ND GENT. Not yet returned from Rome.

DOGE. I would have had
All the fair stars of Venice here to-night

Shining in one bright galaxy.

GENT. We miss
Signor Donato's daughter.

DOGE. Ay, indeed,
My pretty sweet Camilla!—Fair Olivia,
Let Trevisano lead thee to the dance.
Were I one ten years younger, trust me, sir,
I'd not resign this hand. Now a light measure.

[A Dance.]

Is't not a peerless nymph? The youngest Grace
Leading her linked sisters through the maze
Of blossom'd myrtles upon Ida's side,
Is not so light of foot. Rest thee, dear maid.
What is that? Thunder?

ZENO. Yes; a fearful storm.
It rages awfully. Hark! there again!

DOGE. Well; we must keep such coil of merriment
As shall outroar the rattling peal.

Enter FOSCARI.

Ah, truant!

How wilt thou make thy peace?

Fos. I read no war
In these fair looks.

ZENO. Peace is more perilous.

Fos. Ay, truly, Zeno.

ZENO. Whither hast thou been?
Watching her lattice but to catch a glimpse
Of the swift slender shadow that glides past
So gracefully, clouding the soft dim light?

Fos. Pooh! pooh!

ZENO. And with a true devotion bent
Uncovered at her shrine? Why thou art wet!
This is some new device of gallantry,

Some trick of Milan courtship.

FOS. Tush, man, tush !
Ho ! a brisk measure ! Drown with merry notes
Count Zeno's merry riddles ! Wilt thou dance
With me, dear lady ? Do not say me No !

LADY. Oh no !

FOS. Why, that should mean, Oh yes !

DOGE. Good niece,
Will not the Lady Celia join the dance ?
Seek her. I'm young and light enough to-night
To mingle there myself. What ails the music ?
Quicker ! Why break they off ? Dear Zeno, ask.

FOS. Murdered ! Impossible ! I only left—
I am myself—It cannot be. Play on !
On with the dance !

GENT. Here is a man hath seen him,
One who still shakes with fear.

FOS. Bring him to me !
Where is he ? Where ?

DOGE. Zeno, what is this tale ?
ZENO. A tale of horror !

Enter ERIZZO.

ERIZ. Justice, Doge of Venice !
A senator lies reeking in his blood,
Murdered in his own palace. Justice, Doge !

FOS. What senator ?

ERIZ. Canst thou ask that ? Donato.

DOGE. Donato murdered ! the beloved Donato !
The second name of Venice ! Mine old friend !
Lords, to the council. This is not a tale
For woman's gentleness. Good night to all.

[Exeunt Ladies, and some Gentlemen.]

Would he had ta'en my hand !

Fos. He is not dead—
It must be false, it shall be!

ERIZ. What dost thou
Doubt of Donato's death? Thou?

Fos. Hearken, Doge!
His voice hath mockery in it, sharp and loud
As the clear ring of metals: he speaks not
As we, who heard the tale, in broken words
And breathless; his teeth chatter not; his lips
Are firm; there is no trembling in his limbs,
No glare in his keen eyes. None but a fiend,
Fresh from the reek of murder, could so master
The human sympathy, the fellowship
Of Nature and of kind.

DOGE. Yet wherefore—

Enter COSMO.

Cos. Justice!

Fos. Beloved friend!

Cos. Off! off! I come for justice,
For equal justice!

DOGE. Thou shalt have it.

Cos. Doge!
For equal justice!

DOGE. Was he not my friend?
Am I not thine?

Cos. Ay—so the murderer said!—
Friend! the word chokes me.

Fos. Grief hath turned his brain.

DOGE. Thou shalt have justice.

Cos. 'Tis no midnight thief,
No hired assassin, no poor petty villain;—
This is a fall, as of the morning star,
A death such as the first great slayer saw

When Abel lay at his feet,—but I'll have justice !
There be hearts here will crack, old valiant hearts,
When they shall hear this tale,—but I'll have justice !

DOGE. Go some one call the guard. *[Exit ERIZZO.]*

Name the assassin.

Cos. Have I not ? Whither doth he fly !

Fos.

Camilla !

My poor Camilla !

Cos. Thine ! And the earth hears him
And opens not her womb ! The heavens hear
And launch no thunderbolts ! This work is mine.
Hold firm my heart.—Cousin ! Erizzo !

Enter ERIZZO and Guard.

ERIZ.

Seize

Francesco Foscari. Nay, stand not thus,
Gazing on one another. Seize him. Doge,
He is the murderer.

DOGE. Away with thee,
Traitor and slanderer ! He is my son—
Stir not a man of ye !—My son, the idol
Of city and of camp. His life hath been
One blaze of honour. Come to my old arms,—
Speak not a word—thy name is pledge enough,
My son !

ERIZ. Ye know your duty. Seize him, soldiers.

Fos. Approach me at your peril. Know you not
This very morning how yon serpent lay
Under my heel unbruised, a thing of scorn ?
Look not upon us, lords, with doubting eyes,
Ye dare not doubt me—even to deny
Is in some sort a stain !—My shield is bright.
Ye force me to these vaunts ! I could not think

A crime.

ERIZ. Bear hence the murderer. [*Aside.*] Palsies wither
The cowardly arm and plotting brain that feared
To strike him dead at once! [*Aloud.*] Seize him, I say.

Fos. Now he that dares!

Cos. Francesco Foscari,
I do arrest thee for this murder.

Fos. Thou!
Come forth into the light! Off with those plumes!
Look at me! Is this Cosmo? Hath some fiend
Put on that shape? Speak to me!

Cos. Murderer!

Fos. To-day he called me brother!—Deal with me
Even as ye will.

ERIZ. Look to him, soldiers, well,
That he escape not.

Fos. Sir, the Foscari
Know not what that word means. I wait your pleasure.

Cos. Doge! Doth he hear me? Once I could have wept
For such a grief, for him; now I am steeled
By merciless misery, made pitiless
By one that hath no pity. Look! he stands
With such a calm of virtue on his brow,
As if he would outface the all-seeing God
With that proud seeming. Foscari, the dead
Shall cry aloud in heaven, and I on earth
Till vengeance overtake thee. Doge of Venice,
I call on thee for justice on thy son.

Fos. Father!—Oh, start not!—I am innocent.
Hear that, and breathe again. Sir, I commit
My life, my honour, the unsullied name
Of my great ancestors, of him the greatest,
My living father—even his name I trust

To my just cause, and the just laws of Venice.

I am your prisoner.

[Exeunt FOSCARI, guarded, ERIZZO, and COSMO.]

ZENO. Doge!

DOGE. Those lights! Those lights!

They pierce my eye-balls, dart into my brain!

If there be any pity left i' the world,

Make me a darkness and a silence, Zeno,

That I may pray.

ZENO. Lead to his chamber, Sirs. *[Exeunt.]*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

*A Hall of Justice.**Enter COSMO, ERIZZO, Senators, and Officers.*

ERIZ. Is all prepared for trial?

OFFICER.

All. The Doge

Approaches.

SEN. Will the Doge preside?

2ND SEN.

He comes.

How different from his step of yesterday!

How hurried, yet how slow!

Enter DOGE and COUNT ZENO.

ZENO.

Let me assist

Your Highness.

DOGE.

No.

ZENO.

His robes encumber him;

Support them.

DOGE.

Why will you torment me, sir,

With this officious care? These flowers are naught.

Go bring me pungent herbs, hyssop and rue

And rosemary; odours that keep in sense—

I have forgot my handkerchief.

ZENO.

Take this.

DOGE. I am an old man newly stung with grief—
Thou hast forgiven me, Zeno? Are ye ready?
Where is the accuser?

ERIZ.

May it please your Highness
Call forth the prisoner.

Enter FOSCARI, guarded.

Cos.

Oh, not thou, good Doge;
Spare those white hairs!

DOGE.

Dare not to pity me!

Sir, those white hairs are lichens on a rock.
I tell ye, sirs, since yesternight my blood
Is dried up in my veins, my heart is turned
To stone; but I am Doge of Venice still
And know my office. Fear me not. Francesco!
Francesco Foscari—Sir, is he there?
My eyes are old and dim.

Fos.

I am here, father!

Doge! I am here.

DOGE.

Francesco Foscari,
Thou art arraigned for the foul midnight murder
Of the senator Donato. Art thou innocent?
Or guilty?

Fos. Canst thou ask? The fresh-born babe
That knows not yet the guiltiness of thought,
Is not from such crime whiter.

DOGE.

Gracious Heaven
I thank thee! Now the weight is off my soul.
I sinned in my black fear. Where's the accuser?
Let him stand forth. Cosmo—Signor Donato,
Speak.

ERIZ. Look with how calm and proud a mien

Produce thy proofs.

ERIZ. Bring in the corse. My lord,
And ye, the equal judges, spare the son
This miserable duty. I can tell,
For I by chance was there, this tale of blood
And mystery. The late unhappy feud
Is known to all. Returning from St. Mark's
With my young kinsman in his gondola—
For I had missed of mine—we landed close
To the Donato Palace, as the bell
Was tolling midnight. 'Twas an awful storm;
But by the flashing lightning we saw one
Leap from the balcony—a cavalier
Splendid in dress and air. The lightning glared
Full on his face and habit, unconcealed
By hat or cloak, and instantly we knew
Francesco Foscari.

ZENO. Art sure of that?

Cos. Oh, sure! Too sure!

ERIZ. He passed so close, Count Zeno,
That my cloak brushed his vest; but sprang aside,
As he had met an adder, and leaped down
Into a waiting gondola. I call'd,
But Foscari answered not; and Cosmo spake,
Betwixt a sigh and smile, of fair Camilla,
Of their long loves, and of the morning's ire,
And how he hoped this dark and sudden cloud
Would speedily pass away. Even as he spake,
Whilst loitering on the steps, we heard a shriek
Within the house, so piercing, so prolonged,
So born of bitter anguish—to this hour
That shriek is ringing in mine ears! And when,
With trembling hearts and failing limbs, we scaled
The stairs, we saw Donato bathed in blood,

And poor Camilla lying on his breast,
Her arms strained round his neck, as if she tried
To keep in his dear life. *[The corse brought in.]*

The bloody witness
Of this foul deed is here.

Fos. Poor, good old man !
This is a grievous sight.

DOGE. Oh ! would to Heaven
That I so lay, and so—I pray thee, on.
Where are thy proofs ?

ERIZ. They shall come soon enough
Donato, rouse thee ! Look upon those wounds !
Think on the honoured dead !

Cos. I dare not think,
For thought is frenzy. Lords ! the Count Erizzo
Hath told ye how we found the corse. This sword,
The well-known sword of Foscari, was plunged
Deep in his gory breast ; beside him lay
This hat and cloak, the splendid soldier's garb
Of Foscari ; no man had approached the house
Save only Foscari ; and his last word,
Mingled with cries of murder and of help,
Was " Foscari." Is that sword thine ? Disown it,
And, against oath and proof and circumstance,
Thy word—thy naked word—Disown that sword,
And give me back the blessed faith that trusts
In man my fellow ! Look upon it well.

Fos. 'Tis mine.

Cos. He's guilty. 'Twas the last faint hope
On this side Heaven.

DOGE. Cosmo ! It is not his—
He knows not what he says—Give me the sword.

Fos. 'Tis mine ; that which lay sheathed in victory
Before ye yesterday ; that which I bore

Triumphing through the battle. What a blaze
Streamed from the sparkling steel—how bright, how pure,
How glorious, how like the light of Fame—
A wild and dazzling fire! Both, both are quenched.
The sword is mine; but of this foulest deed
I am as ignorant as the senseless blade.

ZENO. Who heard Donato call on Foscari?

ERIZ. Doge, thou hast asked for proofs, for witnesses;
I have one here. Officer, hast thou brought
The lady?

OFFICER. She attends.

ERIZ. Go, lead her in. [*Exit Officer.*]

Cos. What lady? Sure thou canst not mean—

Enter Officer, leading CAMILLA.

Fos. Camilla!

Cos. She walks as in a heavy dream; her senses
Are stupified by sorrow. Count Erizzo,
Why didst thou send for her? Why bring her here?
Had we not breaking hearts enow before
Without poor, poor Camilla?

ERIZ. She alone,
Heard his last dying words. Lady Camilla!

Cos. She neither sees nor hears; she is herself
A moving corse.

ERIZ. Camilla! Speak to her.

Cos. Sister! Heaven shield her senses! She is deaf
Even to my voice. Dear sister!

ERIZ. Lead her towards
The body. So! she sees it.

CAM. Father! Father!
Have I found thee, dear father? Let me sit
Here at thy feet, and lean my aching head
Against thy knee—Oh, how it throbs!—and bury

My face within thy cloak. What ails me, father,
That my heart flutters so! Feel here—He's cold!
He's dead! He's dead!

ERIZ. Camilla!

CAM. Who art thou?
Where am I? Wherefore have ye dragged me forth
Into the glare of day—Oh, cruel! cruel!—
Amongst strange men? Where am I? Foscari! Now
I have a comforter. Have they not told thee
That I am fatherless? Dost weep for me?
For me?

ERIZ. Leave him; he is a murderer.
Thy father's murderer!

CAM. Who dared say that?
Francesco, speak to me!

ERIZ. Pollute her not!
Touch not her garments! Fly his very sight—
He slew thy father.

CAM. Ha! Again! Again!
Cosmo, this man is false. Is he not, Cosmo?
Is he not all one falsehood? Answer me.
I will kneel to thee, Cosmo, for a word,
A sign. Press but my hand. He lets it fall!
Cos. Sister—I cannot tell her.

ERIZ. Thou thyself
Art witness to his crime.

CAM. I never knew
Aught of him but his virtues.

ERIZ. Noble lady,
Thou art before the assembled power of Venice,
Before thy father's corse, before high Heaven—
Answer me truly, lady—Didst thou hear
Thy murdered father call on Foscari?

CAM. Ah! he is innocent.

ERIZ. Didst thou not hear
Foscari's name mixed with his dying shriek?

CAM. He's innocent! Oh, I would stake my life
On Foscari's innocence.

DOGE. Beloved child!

CAM. Ah! Art thou there? Release him! Set him
free!

Thou art the Doge, the mighty Doge of Venice,
Thou hast the power to free him. Save him now
From my hard kinsman! Save him! I remember,
When I was but a little child, I craved
The grace of a poor galley-slave, and thou,
Didst pardon him and set him free as air;—
Wilt thou not save thy son, and such a son,
Who is as clear of this foul sin as thou?
Cosmo, kneel with me!

Cos. I have knelt for justice;
And now again—

CAM. For mercy! mercy!

ERIZ. Answer!
Demand her answer, Doge. She is a witness,
Command her by thy power; thou art the Judge.

DOGE. I am, I am. Ye should have Dukes of stone,
But this is flesh. Camilla, I am not
A King, who wears fair mercy on the cross
Of his bright diadem; I have no power
Save as the whetted axe to strike and slay,
A will-less instrument of the iron law
Of Venice. Daughter—Thou that shouldst have been
My daughter, we are martyrs at the stake,
And must endure. Shall we not copy him,
Who stands there with so brave a constancy,
Patient, unfaltering? Let us choose the right,
And leave the event to Heaven. Speak, my dear child.

CAM. Heaven guide me then! Lords, I am here an orphan,
The orphan of one day.—But yesternight—
Oh! did ye ever see a father die?

Cos. Calm thee, my sister.

CAM. And ye drag me hither—
Ye call me to bear witness—me, a woman;
A wretched, helpless woman!—Against him,
Whom—ye are merciless—ye have no touch
Of pity or of manhood! Do your worst;
I will not answer ye.

Fos. Oh, woman's love,
Pure nurse of kind and charitable thoughts,
Wiser than wisdom, instinct of the soul,
How do I bless thee, holiest love! Camilla,
My brave and true Camilla, thou hast dropt
Balm in the festering wound. Yet answer them.
I cannot fear the truth. Ask her once more.

ERIZ. Were not the last words that Donato spake
Foscari and murder?

CAM. Yes.

ERIZ. Take her away;
She hath confessed enough.

CAM. Oh no! no! no!
Foscari is guiltless! Hear me!—He is guiltless!

DOGE. Canst thou prove that? Thy sweet face always
brought

A comfort. Prove but that.

ERIZ. (*Aside.*) All curses on
The coward Celso! He'll escape me yet.
(*Aloud.*) The facts? The proofs? The witnesses?

CAM. His life;
My heart, my bursting heart. If I had seen
With these poor eyes that horror—had seen him

Stabbing—Oh, thoughts like these may make me mad,
But all the powers of earth and hell can never
Shake my true faith! Foscari! I will share
Thy fate, will die with thee, will be thy bride
Even in that fatal hour, and pass away
With thee to Heaven—So! so!

Fos. She sinks ; she sinks ;
Her strength is overwrought. Oh, die not yet
Till I may die with thee ! Awake, revive,
My plighted love ! The bridal hour will soon
Unite us, my Camilla. Help ! she faints.

ERIZ. Fold her not thus within thy arms! Resign her!

Fos. To thee! While still this arm hath marrow in it!
To thee! Cosmo—thou—thou—Be tender of her,
Be very tender—'tis a broken flower—
And pardon her her love. Take her. The pain
Of death is over now. Proceed, my lords.

ZENO. Let me support her, Cosmo. Thou dost stagger
Under her slender form.

Cos. He spoke to me,
He gazed on me—I felt the long sad look
Dwell on my face—he, at whose crime my soul
Shudders, he spake—and I—men would have thought
I was the guilty one! He bade me love
This dearest, wretchedest. Tell him—No ! no !
Not even a last word.

[*Exeunt COSMO and ZENO with CAMILLA.*

ERIZ. This hapless maid
Hath owned enough. Foscari, wilt thou confess
The murder?

Fos. I am innocent.

ERIZ. Confess ;
Or we must force confession. To the rack !

DOGE. Never whilst I have life ! Am I not still

The Doge of Venice? Rather stretch these stiff
And withered limbs upon thy engines, Count!
Rather crack these old joints! I thought that I
Was steeled against all strokes—but this—

ERIZ. The rack!

Fos. Bethink thee of the Roman fathers, Doge,
Of Brutus and of Manlius; thy son
Will not disgrace thee. Come, the rack, the rack!
I will front pain as a brave enemy,
And rush to the encounter. What is the sense
Of bodily agony to that which I
Endure even now? Disgrace, suspicion, scorn,
Hatred and haughty pity, and that last
Worst pang—her love, her misery. These are tortures!
Let me have something that a warrior's soul
May strive against and conquer. Come, the rack!

DOGE. Never

ERIZ. I must not hear thee, Doge. The question!

Re-enter COSMO and ZENO.

Cos. Stop, on you lives! Forbear this cruelty!
This cowardly cruelty! He will endure—
He will call up the courage of the field
And die before he groans. His eye surveys
That engine steadily, whose very sight
Makes my flesh creep. Remove it. Oh, to see
That butchery—and the old man—the poor old man!
Remove it.

ERIZ. Well. Proceed we then to sentence.

ZENO. First listen to the prisoner. Foscari! speak.

SEN. Yes; let us hear his tale. Defend thyself.

Fos. To ye who doubt! To ye who disbelieve!

Sir, there are spirits that can never stoop
To falsehood; not for wealth, or power, or fame,

Or life, or dearer love. Oh, were ye cast
In the old chivalrous mould, pure diamond souls
On which the dim polluting touch of doubt
Rests not a breathing time! Were ye built up
Of honour—But to ye—Why should I speak
When I have nothing but my knightly word
To prove me innocent?

ERIZ. You are well paid
By this contempt, Count Zeno. Now to judgment.

[*The DOGE, ZENO, ERIZZO, and the Senators retire to the
back of the stage, leaving COSMO and FOSCARI in the
front.*]

Fos. Father! He passes on and doth not speak;
He cannot; he has no words, nothing but tears.
Oh, what must the grief be that forces tears
From his proud heart—his proud and bursting heart!
The flame of youth burnt in him yesterday
At fourscore years; to-day hath made him old.
What groan was that? What other wretch? Donato!
Cosmo! Wilt thou not answer?

Cos. Oh, that voice
Which was such perfect music,—which seemed made
For truth and thought, fit organ, how it jars
My very soul! What wouldst thou?

Fos. I would thank thee
That thou hast spared one pang to a brave heart.
That rack—To have seen me stretched there, to direct
Each fresh progressive torture—He had died
Before our eyes! I thank thee, sir. No more.
Unless a dying man, for I am sentenced—
Look how he sinks his head upon his clenched
And withered hands! I am condemned, and we
Shall meet no more. Thou wilt not join the headsman
To see the axe fall on my neck, nor follow

The shouting multitude, who yesterday
Hail'd me a god, and, with like shouts, to-morrow
Will drag me to the block. We meet no more;
And as a dying man I fain would part
In charity. We were friends, Cosmo—

Cos.

Friends!

I sinned in listening; but whilst he spake
A world of kindly thoughts, a gush of the deep
Old passionate love came o'er my heart—Forgive me
Oh, blessed shade! Friends! Why thy crime were common
Wanting that damning dye—a simple murder!
What though of one kind, noble, generous,
Whose princely spirit scatter'd happiness
As the sun light—a single sin! But 'twas
My father, mine—avenging angel, hear!—
Mine, that so loved thee—

Fos.

That, at the first glance

Of wild suspicion, the first crafty word
Of treacherous hate, doubted, accused, condemned—
Chasing through shameful trial to shameful death—
Yet daring to call down the wrath of God
On a false friend! Oh, cunning self-deceit!
Oh, wondrous cheat of blind mortality!
Thus doth the Evil Spirit cast about
To win a soul from heaven. They come. They come.
Now gentle death.

[*The DOGE, ERIZZO, ZENO, and Senators advance.*]

Speak! I can better bear

Thy words than that long gaze of agony.

I am prepared.

DOGE.

Oh, why did I resume

This bonnet, which thy filial hand had plucked
From my old brow, this fatal coronet,
Predoomed to fall, that scorches me like fire—

Stings me like twisted serpents ! Would I were
A naked slave, chained to his weary oar,
A worm that hath no sense but sufferance,
Any thing vilest and most miserable,
Rather than Doge of Venice ! I must plunge
A dagger in thy breast. Francesco Foscari,
The council doth pronounce thee guilty.

Fos. Ha !

ERIZ. It works. It works.

DOGE. Thou saidst thou wast prepared.

Fos. Ay—but the word ! The first sound of the word !

DOGE. The council doth condemn—

Fos. All, father ? All ?

DOGE. No ; there were two—Count Zeno could not join
Guilty and Foscari ; and I—my son,
Thou couldst not do this deed !

Fos. Thank Heaven ! Thank Heaven !

ERIZ. The sentence, Doge !

Fos. Yes, father. The one pang,
The worse than death,—the infamy is past.
The dagger's in my breast ; now drive it home,
And with a merciful speed.

ERIZ. Sir, thou wilt find
Justice hath bowed to mercy.

Cos. Doge, the sentence !

DOGE. The penalty is death. But for thy rank,
Thy services and mine, it is exchanged
For banishment to Candia. Thou must live
In Canea, an exile, till thy days
Be ended, my dear son.

Fos. Live ! Give me death !
Ye that give infamy, and dare to talk
Of mercy, give me death, painfullest death,
And I will thank ye,—bless ye ! Give me death !

Ye cannot give me life. Sooner the bay,
That wreathes the warrior's brows shall spread and flourish
In a dark mine, shut up from sun and air,
Than I can live without a proud respect,
A white unblemish'd name, the light and breath
Of honour. Death, I say!—a murderer's death!
Ye dare not change the laws.

COS.

Live, and repent.

FOS. Cosmo, if e'er you loved me, call on them
For justice—bloody justice! Doge of Venice,
Maintain the insulted laws! Send me to death,—
To instant death! Oh, father, free thy son
From this dread load of misery! Wouldst thou see
Thy only child shunned as a leper, father?
Sent out into the world a second Cain?
Oh, give me death! death! death!

DOGE.

I knew that life

Would be a lingering agony; and yet
To kill thee—my dear son! Oh, prophecy
Accurst, I feel thee now!

ERIZ.

Remove the prisoner.

What! doth he struggle?

DOGE.

Touch him not, vile slaves

FOS. A moment pause, and ye may lead me hence
Tame as a fondled kid. Ye Senators,
Ye kings of Venice, I appeal from you
To the Supreme Tribunal.

ERIZ.

To thy father?

FOS. To Him that is in heaven. Ye are men,
Frail, erring, ignorant men, guided or driven
By every warring passion: some by love
Of the beloved Donato; some by hate
Of the high Foscari; by envy some;
Many by fear; and one by low ambition.

This ye call justice, lords ! But I appeal
To the All-righteous Judge of earth and heaven,
Before whose throne condemners and condemned
All shall stand equal, at whose feet I swear,
By what my soul holds sacred, by the spurs
Of knighthood, by the Christian's holier Cross,
And by that old man's white and reverend locks,
That I am innocent. Ye, who disbelieve,
And ye who doubt, and ye, the grovelling few,
Believing who condemn, I shower on all
Contempt and pardon. Now, guards, to the prison.

ZENO. Look to the Doge.

FOS. Zeno, when I am gone,
Thou wilt be kind to him ?

ZENO. Even as a son !
Even as thyself.

FOS. Thou truest friend farewell !

ZENO. Look to the Doge.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Donato Palace.

COSMO and ERIZZO.

Cos. Gone to the prison ! No ! my Lord Erizzo.
I know Camilla.

ERIZ. Well—I might mistake.

Cos. Straight from her father's bier, where all night long
She watch'd and wept, to seek—Go, thou art wrong !
Thou art wrong.

ERIZ. Think no more of it. Doth the Senate
Meet to-day ?

Cos. Was she veil'd ?

ERIZ. Who ?

Cos. Whom thou saw'st.

She—not my sister !—Was she veil'd ?

ERIZ. She was.

Cos. How couldst thou know her ?

ERIZ. By the pliant grace
Of the young form, the goddess step, the charm
Of motion. With such port the queenly swan

Glides o'er the waters. Dost thou not remember
When Foscari once—

Cos. Avoid that name. Avoid it.

ERIZ. She's here.

Enter CAMILLA.

Cos. And veil'd! Whence com'st thou sister? Speak,
Why hast thou borne those tears and that wan face
Abroad amongst the happy? Whence com'st thou?

CAM. From one whose heart drops blood for this great
grief.

Cos. Whence?

CAM. From St. Mark's.

Cos. The Doge! The poor old Doge!

ERIZ. The Doge! It was not by the Ducal chambers
That I this morning saw—

CAM. My Lord Erizzo,
I seek not to deceive ye. I have seen
The Doge. But 'twas another wretcheder
Of whom I spake,—one who hath long to live.
I come from where beneath the leaden roofs
Foscari lies.

Cos. And she can speak that name
Sighingly, fondly! She can cast aside
Even maiden modesty! Forgive me, friend,
That, trusting her, I doubted thee. Approach not!
Thou art contaminate.

CAM. He's innocent!
Turn not away, shake me not off, as though
I were some loathed reptile. Cosmo! Brother!
We two are left alone in the wide world,
And I that sate upon that rainbow throne
Of happiness, I am fallen, fallen.

Cos. What wouldst thou?

How may I comfort thee? Sweet gentle soul,
Her tears are daggers. Speak.

CAM. And thou wilt listen?

Cos. Patient as infancy.

CAM. He goes to-night;

And I—nay, start not.

Cos. What of thee?

CAM. And I—

We were betroth'd; he goes a sentenc'd wretch—

But innocent, most innocent! He goes

To scorn, to exile, and to misery,

And I—I came to say farewell to thee,

My brother—I go with him.

Cos. Ha!

ERIZ. She raves.

Look how she trembles; she is overwatched;

This is a frenzy.

CAM. Sir, I am not mad;

I'm a Donato born, and drank in courage

Even with my mother's milk. What if I shake!

Within this trembling frame there is a heart

As firm as thine. Speak to me ere we part,

My brother! Speak to me, whatever words,

However bitter! Anything but silence,

Cold withering silence!

Cos. Sister!

CAM. Bless thee, bless thee,

For that kind word!

Cos. My sister, sit thee down—

Misery hath brought her to this pass.—Camilla,

We had a father once :—he's slain. Wouldst thou

Join this white hand, which he so lov'd to mould

Within his own, the soft and dimpled hand,

With one—

CAM. Oh, pure as thine ! Believe it, Cosmo ;
Pure as thine own !

Cos. We have no father now,
And we should love each other. Stay with me.
I am no tyrant-brother : I'll not force
Thy blooming beauty to some old man's bed
For high alliance ; I'll not plunge thy youth
Into that living tomb where the cold nun
Chants daily requiems, that thy dower may swell
My coffers ; I but ask of thee to stay
With me in thy dear Venice, thy dear home,
Thy mistress, mine. I'll be to thee, Camilla,
A father, brother, lover. Stay with me.
I will be very kind to thee.

CAM. Oh, cruel !
This kindness is the rack.

Cos. I would but save thee
From exile, penury, shame—

CAM. He said so.

Cos. He !

CAM. Ay, he urg'd all that thou canst say against
Himself and me in vain. My heart is firm.
I go. But love me still, oh, love me still,
My brother !

Cos. Listen.

CAM. He said all.

Cos. Camilla !

I'd save thee from a crime, a damning crime—
Did he say that ? From such a parricide,
Such unimagin'd sin—I tell thee, girl,
The Roman harlot, she the infamous
That crush'd her father with her chariot wheels,
She'll be forgotten in thy monstrous guilt,
Whitened by thy black shame.

CAM. Oh, father, father,
I call upon thee ! Look on me from heav'n,
Search my whole soul—'tis white. Oh, when some tale
Of woman's truth brought tears into my eyes,
How often hath he said—Be thou, too, faithful
In weal or woe ! And now—farewell ! farewell !
Cosmo, my heart is breaking—Say farewell,
Only farewell !

Cos. Stay with me.

CAM. No.

Cos. Then go,
Outcast of earth and heaven, of God and man !
Abandon'd, spurn'd, abhorr'd, accurst ! Go forth
A murderer's bride—worse ! worse ! What impious priest
Will dare profane the holy words that join
The pure of heart and hand for ye, for ye,
The parricides—Oh, that she had but died
Innocent in her childhood !

CAM. One day, brother,
Thou'lt grieve for this. Now bless thee ! [*Exit CAMILLA.*]

Cos. Stay !

ERIZ. She's gone.

Cos. Why, let her go, foul stain upon our house !
She was his daughter still, and yesterday
An angel ! And he loved her and she him
With such a dotage ! 'Twas a sight to see
How ere the pretty babe could speak its will,
The chubby hands would cling and fix themselves
Round its dear father's neck. Mother, or nurse,
Or I, the elder child that played with her
Full half the day, were nothing if she caught
One glimpse of that dear father.

ERIZ. Now she'll hang
Around his murderer's neck.

Cos. Do ye all forget
That I'm her brother? Ho, Camilla!

ERIZ. 'Twill be
A triumph 'mid their shame to these misproud
Revengeful Foscari to bear off thus
The glory of your house.

Cos. I'll rescue her.
Where is she? Is she gone? What ho, Camilla!
I'll follow her to the end of the earth. The laws
Give me a father's power. I'll save her yet.
Camilla! Ho, Camilla!

ERIZ. You must seek her
With him. The time draws near. [COSMO rushes out.
Now, Foscari,
I have thee at my feet. [Exit.

SCENE II.

The Sea-shore.

DOGE, FOSCARI, *Guards.*

Fos. Here then we part. Those Guards—send them
away,
Let them not listen to the last faint word,
Nor gaze on the last lingering look. Why, doubt'st thou?
Fear me not—I'll be a true prisoner;
I am a Foscari still, bound by one chain,
Honour. Send them away.

DOGE. Leave us. [Exit GUARDS.

Fos. Ay, now
My soul is free again. That tallest slave
Stood brushing 'gainst my vest—he with the hard
Cold stony eyes—and I—let not that man

Go with me.

DOGE. He shall not.

Fos. How can I waste
A word on such a reptile ! I'd a world
Of sad and loving things to say to thee,
But there's a weight just here—Oh, father ! father !
I thought to have been a comfort to thy age,
But I was born to spread a desolation
On all I love.

DOGE. I would not change my son,
Banished although he be, with the proudest sire
In Christendom. But we must part. These men
Are merciless.

Fos. Implore no grace of them.
And yet to leave this brave and tender heart
To wither in its princely solitude,
Friendless, companionless.

DOGE. Age hath one friend,
One sure friend—Death.

Fos. Oh, I shall not be by
To close thine eyes or kneel beside thy couch,
Or gather from thy lips the last fond sound
Of blessing or of pardon. Bless me now,
Parting is dying.

DOGE. Bless thee, my dear son.

Enter CAMILLA.

Camilla !

Fos. Bless her too. She is thy daughter ;
She goes with me to exile.

DOGE. She is blest
In her high constancy. Beloved child,
Thy virtuous love hath softened the sharp pang
Of this dread hour.

CAM. Father! My only father!
Foscari, the bark awaits us.

Fos. What, already?

CAM. All is prepared.

DOGE. I should have told thee so;
But when I would have said, Go! go! my tongue
Clave to my mouth.

Fos. Already! Write to me
Often. Is that forbidden? Yet the Doge
May ask my Candiote jailer if his prisoner
Be strictly kept. Then I shall sometimes see,
For surely he will show it me, thy name,
Thy writing, something thou hast touched. 'Twill be
A comfort.

DOGE. I will write to thee.

Fos. And think
Of me when the pale moon lets fall her cold
And patient light upon the Adrian wave
That sighs and trembles. Think of me then.

DOGE. Always.
By sun, or moon, or star; in the bright day,
In the night's darkness, but one single thought
Will dwell in my old heart—My banished son.

CAM. Alas! Francesco, why wilt thou prolong
This useless agony?

Fos. He hath not said
Farewell. One last embrace, one blessing more—
The last!

CAM. What step is that?

Enter ZENO.

ZENO. I crave your pardon:
But I must pray the Doge to come with me
Straight to the Senate. 'Tis an earnest business.

I do beseech your Highness. Leave him, Foscari!
Cling not together as your very souls
Were interlaced. The Senate, Doge, demands thee.

FOS. The Senate! What! hath he another son
To try, to torture, to condemn? Hath he
Another heart to break? Yet go. For once
Their cruelty is mercy. Go.

DOGE. Whilst still
These eyes may gaze on thee! Ere yonder cloud
Shall pass across the sun, a darker cloud
Will wrap me in its blackness; then the throne,
The judgment-seat, the grave—no matter where
The old man rests his bones! One dim eclipse
Will shadow all—but now—say to the Senate
That at their bidding I am sending forth.
My son to exile.

FOS. Go! go!

ZENO. Doge, thy duty,
Thy princely duty calls thee.

DOGE. To that word,
Which was to me a god, have I not offered
My child upon the altar? Is the sacrifice
Still incomplete? Farewell! farewell!

ZENO. Francesco,
Embark not till ye hear from me.—My lord,
This way.

DOGE. I pray you pardon me—I'm old—
I'm very old. [Exeunt DOGE and ZENO.]

CAM. Nay, sit not shivering there
Upon the ground. Hast thou no word for me,
Francesco?

FOS. Is he gone? Quite gone? For ever?

CAM. Take comfort.

FOS. Is he gone? I did not say

Farewell, nor God be with thee! When men part
From common friends for a slight summer voyage
They cry Heaven speed thee! and I could not say
Farewell to my dear father, nor call down
One benison on that white reverend head
Which I shall never see again. There breathes not
A wretch so curst as I.

CAM. Foscari, the lips
That I have kissed are cold.

Fos. Oh! bruised flower,
Whose very wounds do shed an odorous balm!
My gentle comforter! could I forget'
Thy misery! Forgive me.

CAM. I have left
His bier, his bloody bier.

Fos. Ay, there it is!
Fortune, and friends, and home, to fly from them
Were nothing!—but she leaves the unburied corpse
Of her dead father, the dear privilege
To sit and watch till the last hour, to strew
His body with sweet flowers like a bank in spring
Making death beautiful, to follow him
To his cold bed, and drop slow heavy tears
To the bell's knolling. She leaves grief to go
With me, whom the world calls—Oh, matchless love,
Life could not pay thee! Matchless, matchless love!

CAM. He, that blest spirit, knows thy innocence:
And I—I never doubted.

Fos. Matchless love!
We'll never part, we'll live and die together,
There is a comfort in the word. Camilla,
Where are the guards, the ship? My heart beats high
At thy exceeding truth. We shall set forth
As to a victory.

Enter COSMO and ERIZZO.

Cos. She's here! She's here!
Move not a step. Dare not to stir. Camilla,
Follow me.

Fos. Who is he that dares obstruct
The mandate of the Senate? I'm an exile
Travelling to banishment. All Venice knows
The piteous story of the Doge's son
Condemned by his own father, and of her
His true and faithful love. Now leave us, Sir;
Let us depart in peace.

Cos. Murderer! Ravisher!
I seek my sister.

Fos. She stands there. Ask her
Whom she will follow.

CAM. He knows well. Francesco,
The whole world shall not part us.

Fos. Mine! Mine own!
My very own! I've lost wealth, country, home,
Fame, friends, and father; I have nothing left
Save thee, my dear one; but with thee I'm rich,
And great, and happy. Now let us go forth
Into our banishment. Give me thy hand,
My wife.

Cos. Camilla, I command thee stay—
The laws of Venice give to me a power
Absolute as a father's. Loose her, Sir.
Let go her hand. I warn ye part. They'll drive me
Into a madness. If thou be a man,
Let's end this quarrel bravely.

CAM. Heed him not!

Fos. Calm thee! He is thy brother.

Cos. I disclaim her.

Fos. Tremble not so! I am unarmed, Camilla.

Cos. Dost hold her as a shield before thy breast?
Dost palter with me, coward?

Fos. [*Breaking from CAMILLA.*] Off!—A sword!
A sword for charity!

CAM. Help! Help! The Doge!
The guard! Stay with them! Part them! Leave them
not!

Hold them asunder, Count, and in my prayers
Thou shalt be sainted! Help! [*CAMILLA rushes out.*]

Fos. Give me a sword!

Cos. Ay, his or mine. I am so strongly armed / -
In my most righteous cause, I would encounter
A mailed warrior with a willow wand.

ERIZ. There is my weapon.

Fos. Why thou wast my foe!
But this is such a bounty as might shame
The princely hand of friendship. Not the blade
Girt by a crowned Duke around my loins,
An Emperor's gift, the day I won my spurs
In the Suabian victory, not that knightly sword
Was welcomer than this.

Cos. Foscari, come on!

Fos. I would thou wert a soldier!

Cos. Now.

[*They fight, and FOSCARI falls.*]

ERIZ. The Fates

Work for me.—Ha!

Cos. Erizzo!

ERIZ. Is he dead?

Cos. Alas! Alas! Lift up his head.

CAM. (*Behind the scene.*) Here! Here!
Canst thou not hasten?

Enter CAMILLA and the DOGE.

(Entering.) Foscari! He's slain!

Oh, bloody, bloody brother! Kill me too!

Be merciful! Help!

Cos. Doth he live?

CAM. Away!

Thy hands are bloody!—Help, Doge Foscari!

Help, father!—The old man stands stiffening there

Into a statue—He'll die first! Off! Off!

Wouldst kill him o'er again? He bleeds to death!

Father, it is thy blood.

DOGE. My son! My son!

Who hath done this?

CAM. He is not dead. Support him.

See how his eye-lids quiver. Foscari!

'Tis I, thy wife!

Fos. Mine own!

Cos. Thanks, gracious Heaven!

Enter ZENO and Guards.

ZENO. Seize Count Erizzo, Guard. Have ye not heard—
What spectacle is this?—Know ye not, Sirs,
That Foscari is guiltless, that the murderer
Is found?

Fos. Hear that! I'm innocent! Hear that!
The murderer is found! Nay, hold me not—
I'm well—I'm strong. Father, there is no stain
In the long line of Foscari! Camilla,
My faithfullest—

DOGE. He falls.

CAM. There wanted this
To crown the brimming cup of my despair.

We should have been the happiest two, Francesco,
Since the first pair in Paradise—but he
That was my brother—

Cos. Peace. Who slew Donato?

ZENO. Celso, bribed by Erizzo to destroy
Francesco Foscari, by Donato crossed
Slew him, and aided by the sword and cloak
Dropped by Francesco, cast this deed of horror
On the most innocent.

Cos. Hath he confessed?

ZENO. All. Seize Erizzo, bind him.

ERIZ. There's no need.

The work is done, well done—Signor Donato,
I thank thee still for that—and such revenge
Is cheaply bought with life.

Cos. Oh, damned viper!

ERIZ. Ay! Do ye know me? Not a man of ye
But is my tool or victim. I'm your master.
This was my aim when old Donato died,
And, but that Celso dared not cope with Foscari
And sought to catch him in a subtler springe,
I had been now your Doge. And I am more.
I am your master, Sirs. Look where he lies
The towering Foscari, who yesterday
Stood statelier than the marble gods of Rome
In their proud beauty. Harken! It is mute,
The tongue which darted words of fiery scorn,
And cold contempt, and bitter pardon—dared
To hurl on me fierce pardon! Ha! he shivers!
His stout limbs writhe! The insect that is born
And dies within an hour would not change lives
With Foscari. I am content. For thee
I have a tenfold curse. Long be thy reign,
Great Doge of Venice!

DOGE. Ay, I am the Doge ;
Lead him to instant death. [*Exit ERIZZO guarded.*]

My son !

Cos. 'Tis I
That am the only murderer of the earth—
I that slew him. Bring racks and axes—

DOGE. Live !
I pardon thee. He pardons thee. Live, Cosmo ;
It is thy Prince's last behest. I've been
O'erlong a crowned slave. Go ! dross to dross.
[*Flinging off the Ducal Bonnet.*]

And bruise the stones of Venice ! Tell the Senate
There lies their diadem. Now I am free !
Now I may grieve and pity like a man !
May weep, and groan, and die ! My heart may burst
Now ! Start not, Zeno—Didst thou never hear
Of a broken heart ? Look there.

ZENO. Hush ! He revives.

CAM. My Foscari !

Fos. Camilla ! Is't Camilla ?
Is she not weeping ? What canst thou weep now
When honour is redeemed and a bright name ?
Why there should be no tear in all the world ;
Gladness is come from Heaven.

CAM. Death ! Death !

Fos. This joy
Is life. Who talked of death ? I cannot die
In such a happiness. I'm well.

ZENO. He sinks ;
Support him.

Cos. Is he dead ?

DOGE. Beloved son,
How art thou ?

Fos. Strong at heart. What are those shapes

That hover round us? There! There! There!

DOGE

Thy friends.

Fos. Friends! Have they heard that I am innocent?
That I'm no murderer? That I do not shame
My father's glory? Let it be proclaimed—
Tell Venice—tell—

[Dies.

ZENO.

He's gone.

CAM.

Mine! Still mine own!

Bury me with him! He is mine.

Camilla - Healed

JULIAN:

A TRAGEDY.

In Five Acts.

THE Story and Characters of the following Tragedy are altogether fictitious. Annabel's cautions to silence in the first Scene, and the short dialogue between her and Julian, after he awakens, will be recognised by the classical reader as borrowed from the fine opening of the *Orestes* of Euripides ; the incident of uncovering the body in the last Act is also taken from the *Electra* of Sophocles. Of any other intentional imitation, the Author is unconscious.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>Alfonso, King of Sicily, a boy, disguised as</i>	}	Miss Foote.
<i>Theodore</i>		
<i>The Duke of Melfi, Uncle to Alfonso, and</i>	}	Mr. Bennett.
<i>Regent of the Kingdom</i>		
<i>Julian, Melfi's Son</i>		Mr. Macready.
<i>Count D'Alba, a powerful Nobleman</i>		Mr. Abbott.
<i>Valore</i> }	}	Mr. Baker.
<i>Leanti</i> }		Mr. Egerton.
<i>Calvi</i> }		Mr. Chapman.
<i>Paolo, Julian's Servant</i>		Mr. Ley.
<i>Bertone, Servant to Count D'Alba</i>		Mr. Comer.
<i>Renzi, an old Huntsman</i>		Mr. Mears.
<i>An Archbishop.</i>		

Nobles, Prelates, Officers, Guards, Murderers, &c.

Annabel, Julian's Wife Miss Lacy.

The Scene is in and near Messina ; the time of action two days.

PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN THEATRE,
FEBRUARY, 1823.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY A FRIEND.

SPOKEN BY MR. CONNOR.

THEY who in Prologues for your favours ask,
Find every season more perplex their task ;
Though doubts and hopes and tremblings do not fail,
The points fall flatly and the rhymes grow stale ;
Why should the Author hint their fitting parts,
In all the pomp of Verse, to " British hearts ?"
Why to such minds as yours with ardour pray,
For more than justice to a first essay ?
What need to show how absolute your power ?
What stake awaits the issue of the hour—
How hangs the scale 'twixt agony and joy,
What bliss you nourish, or what hopes destroy ?—
All these you feel ;—and yet we scarce can bring
A prologue to " the posey of a ring."
To what *may* we allude ?—Our plot untold
Is no great chapter from the times of old ;
On no august association rests,
But seeks its earliest home in kindly breasts,—

Its scene, as inauspicious to our strain,
Is neither mournful Greece, nor kindling Spain,
But Sicily—where no defiance hurled
At freedom's foes may awe the attending world.
But since old forms forbid us to submit
A Play without a Prologue to the Pit ;
Lest this be missed by some true friend of plays,
Like the dull colleague of his earlier days ;
Thus let me own how fearlessly we trust
That you will yet be mercifully just.

JULIAN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Royal Palace. JULIAN sleeping on a couch. ANNABEL.

ANN. No ; still he sleeps ! 'Twas but the myrtle bud
Tapping against the casement, as the wind
Stirred in the leafy branches. Well he loved
That pleasant birdlike sound, which, as a voice,
Summon'd us forth into the fresher air
Of eve or early morn. Ah ! when again—
And yet this sleep is hopeful. For seven nights
He had not tasted slumber. Who comes here ?

Enter ALFONSO as THEODORE.

The gentle page ! Alas, to wake him now !
Hush, Theodore ! Tread softly—softlier, boy !
ALF. Doth he still sleep ?

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ANN. Speak lower.

ALF. Doth he sleep?

ANN. Avoid the couch; come this way; close to me.
He sleeps. He hath not moved in all the hours
That thou hast been away.

ALF. Then we may hope;
Dear lady, we may hope.

ANN. Alas! Alas!
See how he lies, scarce breathing. Whilst I hung
Over his couch I should have thought him dead,
But for his short and frequent sighs.

ALF. Ah me!
Not even in slumber can he lose the sense
Of that deep misery; and I—he wakes!
Dost thou not see the quivering mantle heave
With sudden motion?

ANN. Thou hast wakened him.
Thy clamorous grief hath roused him. Hence! Begone!
Leave me!

ALF. And yet his eyes are closed. He sleeps.
He did but move his hand.

ANN. How changed he is!
How pale! How wasted! Can one little week
Of pain and sickness so have faded thee,
My princely Julian! But eight days ago
There lived not in this gladsome Sicily
So glad a spirit. Voice and step and eye
All were one happiness; till that dread hour,
When drest in sparkling smiles, radiant and glowing
With tender thoughts, he flew to meet the King
And his great father. He went forth alone;
Frenzy and grief came back with him.

ALF. And I,
Another grief.

ANN. Thou wast a comforter.
All stranger as thou art, hast thou not shared
My watch as carefully, as faithfully
As I had been thy sister! Ay, and he,
If ever in this wild mysterious woe
One sight or sound hath cheered him, it hath been
A glance, a word of thine.

ALF. He knows me not.

ANN. He knows not me.

ALF. I never heard before
That 'twas to meet the King yon fatal night—
Knowingly, purposely—How could he guess
That they should meet? What moved him to that thought?

ANN. Stranger although thou be, thou canst but know
Prince Julian's father is the Regent here,
And rules for his young kinsman King Alfonso!

ALF. Ay—Poor Alfonso!

ANN. Wherefore pity him?

ALF. I know not—but I am an orphan too!
I interrupt thee, lady.

ANN. Yet in truth
A gentle pity lingers round the name
Of King Alfonso, orphaned as thou sayst,
And drooping into sickness when he lost
His father, ever since the mournful boy
Hath dwelt in the Villa d'Oro.

ALF. Hast thou seen him?

ANN. The King? No. I'm of Naples. When Prince
Julian
First brought me here a bride, his royal cousin
Was fixed beside his father's dying bed.
I never saw him: yet I know him well;
For I have sate and listen'd, hour by hour,
To hear my husband talk of the fair Prince,

And his excelling virtues.

ALF. Did he?—Ah!—

But 'twas his wont, talking of those he loved,
To gild them with the rich and burnish'd glow
Of his own brightness, as the evening sun
Decks all the clouds in glory.

ANN. Very dear

Was that young boy to Julian. 'Twas a friendship
Fonder than common, blended with a kind
Protecting tenderness, such as a brother
Might fitly show unto the younger born.

ALF. Oh, he hath proved it!

ANN. Thou dost know them both?

ALF. I do. Say on, dear lady.

ANN. Three weeks since

The Duke of Melfi went to bring his ward
Here to Messina—

ALF. To be crowned. They came not.
But wherefore went Prince Julian forth to meet them?

ANN. Father nor cousin came; nor messenger,
From Regent or from King; and Julian chafed
And fretted at delay. At length a peasant,
No liveried groom; a slow foot-pacing serf,
Brought tidings that the royal two that morn
Left Villa d'Oro. Glowing from the chase
Prince Julian stood; his bridle in his hand,
New lighted, soothing now his prancing steed,
And prattling now to me;—for I was still
So foolish fond to fly into the porch
To meet him, when I heard the quick sharp tread
Of that bright Arab, whose proud step I knew
Even as his master's voice. He heard the tale
And instant sprang again into his seat,
Wheeled round, and darted off at such a pace

As the fleet greyhound, at her speed, could scarce
Have matched. He spake no word; but as he passed,
Just glanced back at me with his dancing eyes,
And such a smile of joy, and such a wave
Of his plumed bonnet! His return thou know'st.

ALF. I was its wretched partner.

ANN. He on foot,
Thou on the o'er-travelled horse, slow, yet all stained
With sweat, and panting as if fresh escaped
From hot pursuit; and how he called for wine
For his poor Theodore, his faithful page;
Then sate him down and shook with the cold fit
Of aguish fever, till the strong couch rocked
Like a child's cradle. There he sate and sighed;
And then the frenzy came. Theodore!

ALF. Lady!

ANN. He utters nought but madness;—yet sometimes,
Athwart his ravings, I have thought—have feared—
Theodore, thou must know the cause?

ALF. Too well.

ANN. Oh, tell me—

ALF. Hush! He wakes.

[ALFONSO retires behind the couch out of JULIAN's sight.]

ANN. Julian! Dear Julian!

JUL. Sure I have slept a long, long while! Where am I?
How came I hither? Whose kind hand is this?
My Annabel!

ANN. Oh, what a happiness
To see thee gently wake from gentle sleep!
Art thou not better? Shall I raise thee up?

JUL. Ay, dearest. Have I then been ill? I'm weak.
I trouble thee, my sweet one.

ANN. 'Tis a joy
To minister unto thee.

JUL. Wipe my brow.
And part these locks that the fresh air may cool
My forehead ; feel ; it burns.

ANN. Alas ! how wild
This long neglect hath made thy glossy curls,
How tangled !

JUL. I am faint. Pray lay me down.
Surely the day is stifling.

ANN. There. Good boy,
Throw wide the casement. Doth not the soft breeze
Revive thee ?

JUL. Yes. I'm better. I will rise.
Raise me again ;—more upright ;—So ! Dear wife,
A sick man is as wayward as a child ;
Forgive me. Have I been long ill ?

ANN. A week.

JUL. I have no memory of aught. 'Tis just
Like waking from a dream ; a horrible
Confusion of strange miseries ; crime and blood
And all I love—Great Heaven ! how clear it seems !
How like a truth ! I thought that I rode forth
On my white Barbary horse—Say, did I ride
Alone that day ?

ANN. Yes.

JUL. Did I ? Could I ? No.
Thou dost mistake. I did not. Yet 'tis strange
How plain that horror lives within my brain
As what hath been.

ANN. Forget it.

JUL. Annabel,
I thought I was upon that gallant steed
At his full pace. Like clouds before the wind
We flew, as easily as the strong bird
That soars nearest the sun ; till in a pass

Between the mountains, screams and cries of help
Rang in mine ears, and I beheld—Oh, God !
It was not—Could not—No. I have been sick
Of a sharp fever, and delirium shows,
And to the bodily sense makes palpable,
Unreal forms, objects of sight and sound
Which have no being save in the burning brain
Of the poor sufferer. Why should it shake me !

ANN

Julian,

Couldst thou walk to the window and quaff down
The fragrant breeze, it would revive thee more
Than food or sleep. Forget these evil dreams.
Canst thou not walk ?

JUL.

I'll try.

ANN.

Lean upon me

And Theodore. Approach, dear boy, support him.

JUL. (*Seeing ALFONSO.*) Ha ! Art thou here ? Thou ! I
am blinded, dazzled !

Is this a vision, this fair shape that seems
A living child ? Do I dream now ?

ANN.

He is

Young Theodore. The page, who that sad night
Returned—

JUL.

Then all is real. Lay me down

That I may die.

ANN.

Nay, Julian, raise thy head.

Speak to me, dearest Julian.

JUL.

Pray for me

That I may die.

ALF.

Alas ! I feared too surely

That when he saw me—

ANN.

Julian ! This is grief,

Not sickness. Julian !

ALF.

Rouse him not, dear lady !

See how his hands are clenched. Waken him not
To frenzy. Oh, that I alone could bear
This weight of misery!

ANN. He knows the cause,
And I—It is my right, my privilege
To share thy woes, to soothe them. I'll weep with thee,
And that will be a comfort. Didst thou think
Thou couldst be dearer to me than before
When thou wast well and happy? But thou art
Now. Tell me this secret. I'll be faithful.
I'll never breathe a word. Oh, spare my heart
This agony of doubt! What was the horror
That maddened thee?

JUL. Within the rifted rocks
Of high Albano, rotting in a glen
Dark, dark at very noon, a father lies
Murdered by his own son.

ANN. And thou didst see
The deed? An awful sight to one so good!
Yet—

JUL. Birds obscene, and wolf, and ravening fox,
Ere this—only the dark hairs on the ground
And the brown crusted blood! And she can ask
Why I am mad!

ANN. Oh, a thrice awful sight
To one so duteous! Holy priests shall lave
With blessed water that foul spot, and thou,
Pious and pitying, thou shalt—

JUL. Hear at once,
Innocent Torturer, that drop by drop
Pour'st molten lead into my wounds—that glen—
Hang not upon me!—In that darksome glen
My father lies. I am a murderer,
A parricide, accurst of God and man.

Let go my hand! purest and whitest saint,
Let go!

ANN. This is a madness. Even now
The fever shakes him.

JUL. Why, the mad are happy!
Annabel, this is a soul-slaying truth.
There stands a witness.

ALF. Julian knew him not.
It was to save a life, a worthless life.
Oh, that I had but died beneath the sword
That seemed so terrible! That I had ne'er
Been born to grieve thee, Julian! Pardon me,
Dear lady, pardon me!

ANN. Oh, gentle boy,
How shall we soothe this grief?

ALF. Alas! alas!
Why did he rescue me! I'm a poor orphan;
None would have wept for me; I had no friend
In all the world save one. I had been reared
In simpleness; a quiet grave had been
A fitter home for me than the rude world;
A mossy heap, no stone, no epitaph,
Save the brief words of grief and praise (for Grief
Is still a Praiser) he perchance had spoke
When they first told him the poor boy was dead.
Shame on me that I shunned the sword!

JUL. By Heaven,
It could not be a crime to save thee! kneel
Before him, Annabel. He is the King.

ANN. Alfonso?

ALF. Ay, so please you, fairest Cousin,
But still your servant. Do not hate me, lady,
Though I have caused this misery. We have shared
One care, one fear, one hope, have watched and wept

Together. Oh, how often I have longed,
As we sate silent by his restless couch,
To fall upon thy neck and mix our tears,
And talk of him. I am his own poor Cousin,
Thou wilt not hate me ?

ANN. Save that lost one, who
Could hate such innocence?

JUL. 'Twas not in hate
But wild ambition. No ignoble sin
Dwelt in his breast. Ambition, mad ambition,
That was his Idol. To that bloody god
He offered up the milk-white sacrifice,
The pure unspotted Victim. And even then,
Even in the crime, without a breathing space
For penitence or prayer, my sword—Alfonso,
Thou wouldst have gone to Heaven.

ANN. Art thou certain
That he is dead ?

JUL. I saw him fall. The ground
Was covered with his blood.

ANN. Tell me the tale.
Didst thou—I would not wantonly recal
That scene of anguish—Didst thou search his wound?

JUL. Annabel, in my eyes that scene will dwell
For ever, shutting out all lovely sights,
Even thee, my Beautiful ! That torturing thought
Will burn a living fire within my breast
Perpetually ; words can nothing add,
And nothing take away. Fear not my frenzy !
I am calm now. Thou knowest how buoyantly
I darted from thee, straight o'er vale and hill,
Counting the miles by minutes. At the pass
Between the Albano mountains, I first breathed
A moment my hot steed, expecting still

To see the royal escort. Afar off
As I stood, shading with my hand my eyes,
I thought I saw them ; when at once I heard
From the deep glen, east of the pass, loud cries
Of mortal terror. Even in agony
I knew the voice, and darting through the trees
I saw Alfonso, prostrate on the ground,
Clinging around the knees of one, who held
A dagger over him in act to strike,
Yet with averted head, as if he feared
To see his innocent victim. His own face
Was hidden ; till at one spring I plunged my sword
Into his side ; then our eyes met, and he—
That was the mortal blow !—screamed and stretched out
His hands. Falling and dying as he was,
He half rose up, hung speechless in the air,
And looked—Oh, what had been the bitterest curse
To such a look ! It smote me like a sword
Here, here. He died.

ANN. And thou?

JUL. I could have lain
In that dark glen for ever ; but there stood
The dear-bought, and the dear, kinsman and prince
And friend. We heard the far-off clang of steeds
And armed men, and, fearing some new foe,
Came homeward.

ANN. And did he, then, the unhappy,
Remain upon the ground?

JUL. Alas ! he did.

ANN. Oh, it was but a swoon! Listen, dear Julian,
I tell thee I have comfort.

JUL. There is none
Left in the world. But I will listen to thee,
My faithfullest.

ANN. Count D'Alba sent to crave
An audience. Thou wast sleeping. I refused
To see him; but his messenger revealed
To Constance his high tidings, which she poured
In my unwilling ears, for I so feared
To wake thee, that ere half her tale was told
I chid her from me; yet she surely said
The Duke thy father—

JUL. What?

ANN. Approached the city.

JUL. Alive? Alive? Oh no! no! no! Dead! Dead!
The corse, the clay-cold corse!

ANN. Alive, I think;

But Constance—

ALF. He will sink under this shock
Of hope.

ANN. Constance heard all.

JUL. Constance! What ho,
Constance!

ANN. She hears thee not.

JUL. Go seek her! Fly!
If he's alive—Why art thou not returned,
When that one little word will save two souls!

[Exit ANNABEL.]

ALF. Take patience, dearest Cousin!

JUL. Do I not stand
Here like a man of marble? Do I stir?
She creeps; she creeps. Thou would'st have gone and back
In half the time.

ALF. Nay, nay, 'tis scarce a minute.

JUL. Thou may'st count hours and ages on my heart.
Is she not coming?

ALF. Shall I seek her?

JUL. Hark!

They've met. There are two steps; two silken gowns
Rustling; one whispering voice. Annabel! Constance!
Is he—one word! Only one word!

Enter ANNABEL.

ANN.

He lives.

[*JULIAN sinks on his knees before the couch; ALFONSO
and ANNABEL go to him, and the scene falls.*]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A splendid Hall of Audience in the Royal Palace.

D'ALBA and BERTONE

D'ALBA. Again refuse to see me !

BERT. Nay, my lord,
She's still beside her husband's couch, and Paolo
Refused to bear the message.

D'ALBA. Even her lacquey
Reads my hot love and her contempt. No matter !
How's Julian ?

BERT. Mending fast.

D'ALBA. He'll live ! He'll live !
She watches over him, making an air
With her sweet breath ;—he'll be immortal ! Yet
If that dark tale be true—or half—Bertone,
Haste to the Court of Guard ; seek Juan Castro,
A Spanish soldier ; lead him home. I'll join ye.
Hence ! I expect the Barons, whom I summoned
To meet me here. Come back. See if the Princess
Will now admit me. No ! 'twould wake suspicion.

Hence to the Court of Guard.

[*Exit BERTONE.*]

I think that scorn

Doth fan love more than beauty. Twice to-day
Have I paced patiently these royal halls,
Like some expecting needy courtier. Swell not,
Proud charmer, thy vast debt! Where lag these Barons?
Methinks this change might rouse—

Enter CALVI, followed by other Nobles.

Ha! Calvi, welcome.

CALVI. A fair good morrow, D'Alba!

D'ALBA.

Hast thou heard

These heavy tidings? The young King—

[*Approaching to meet the other Lords as they enter.*]

My Lords,

Good morrow's out of date. Know ye the news?

So men salute to-day.

CALVI. Alfonso dead?

D'ALBA.

Murdered.

CALVI. And Melfi king.

D'ALBA.

Ay, Here's a letter

[*Giving a letter to CALVI.*]

From the great Regent—Pshaw! how my rude tongue

Stumbles at these new dignities!—the King.

Therefore I summoned ye. He will be here

Anon.

Enter VALORE and other Nobles

Valore, thou art late.

VALORE.

This tale

Puts lead into men's heels. How fell it?

D'ALBA.

Read,

Count Calvi! Read!

CALVI. (*Reads.*) "Alfonso being dead, and I hurt almost to death, they left me fainting on the ground, where I lay till "a poor but honest muleteer bore me to his hut"—
He hath been wounded!

D'ALBA. He's alive. The boy!
Only the pretty boy! Read on. Read on.

CALVI. (*Reads.*) "Make known these missives to our loyal "people. We shall follow them straight. From your loving "cousin,

"THE KING."

VALORE. The King. How he will wear his state!

Why, D'Alba,

Thy worshipped Annabel chose well; she'll be
A Queen.

D'ALBA. Yet my poor title, had she graced it,
Comes by unquestioned, sheer descent, unstain'd
By dark mysterious murder. My good fathers—
Heaven rest their souls!—lie safely in the church-yard,
A simple race; whilst these high Princes—Sirs,
These palace walls have echoes, or I'd tell ye—
'Tis a deep riddle, but amongst them all
The pretty boy is dead.

Enter LEANTI.

Leanti!

LEANTI.

Lords,

The King is at the gate.

D'ALBA. The King! Now, Sirs,
Don your quick smiles, and bend your supple knees;—
The King!

Enter MELFI.

(*Aside.*) He's pale, he hath been hurt. (*Aloud.*)
My liege.

Your vassals bid you welcome.

MELFI. Noble Signors,
I greet you well. Thanks, D'Alba. Good Leanti,
I joy to see those reverend locks. I never
Thought to behold a friendly face again.
And now I bring ye sorrow. Death hath been
Too busy; though the ripe and bearded ear
Escap'd his sickle—but ye know the tale;
Ye welcomed me as King; and I am spared
The painful repetition.

VALORE. Sire, we know
From your own royal hand enough for joy
And sorrow; Death hath ta'en a goodly child
And spared a glorious man. But how—

MELFI. My Lord,
What wouldst thou more? Before I entered here
Messina's general voice had hailed her Sovereign.
Lacks but the ceremonial form. 'Twere best
The accustomed pageant were performed even now,
Whilst ye, Sicilian Barons, strength and grace
Of our Sicilian realm, are here to pledge
Solemn allegiance. Say I sooth, Count D'Alba?

D'ALBA. In sooth, my liege, I know not. Seems to me
One form is wanting. Our bereaved state
Stands like a widow, one eye dropping tears
For her lost lord, the other turned with smiles
On her new bridegroom. But even she, the Dame
Of Ephesus, the buxom relict, famed
For quick despatch o'er every widowed mate,
Woman, or state—even she, before she wed,
Saw the good man entombed. The funeral first;
And then the coronation.

MELFI. Scoffer! Lords,
The corse is missing.

CALVI. Ha! Perchance he lives!

MELFI. He fell, I tell thee.

VALORE. And the assassin?

MELFI. He

Escaped, when I too fell.

D'ALBA. He! Why, my liege,

Was there but one?

MELFI. What mean ye, Sirs? Stand off.

D'ALBA. Cannot your Highness guess the murderer?

MELFI. Stand from about me, Lords! Dare ye to front
A King? What, do ye doubt me; you, or you?

Dare ye to doubt me? Dare ye look a question

Into mine eyes? Take thy gaze off; A King

Demands a modester regard. Now, Sirs,

What do ye seek? I tell ye, the fair boy

Fell underneath the assassin's sword; and I,

Wounded almost to death, am saved to prove

My subjects' faith, to punish, to reward,

To reign, I tell ye, nobles. Now, who questions?

Who glares upon me now? What! are ye mute?

LEANTI. Deign to receive our homage, Sire, and pardon
The undesigned offence. Your Highness knows
Count D'Alba's mood.

MELFI. And he knows mine. Well, well!
Be all these heats forgotten.

CALVI. [To D'ALBA.] How his eye
Wanders around the circle!

MELFI. Ye are met,
Barons of Sicily, in such august
And full assemblage as may well beseem
Your office, honour well yourselves and me;
Yet one is missing,—greatest, first, and best,—
My son. Knows not Prince Julian that his father
Is here? Will he not come? Go some one say

That I would see him.

[*Exit CALVI.*]

VALORE. Sire, the Prince hath lain
Sick of a desperate malady.

MELFI. Alas!

And I—Sick didst thou say?

VALORE. Eight days have passed
Since he hath left his couch.

LEANTI. He's better now.
The gentle Princess, who with one young page
Hath tended him—

MELFI. What page?

LEANTI. A stranger boy,
Seen but of few, young Theodore.

MELFI. A stranger!
Say on. The Princess—?

LEANTI. As I crossed the hall
I met her, with her own glad step, her look
Of joy; and when I asked how fared Prince Julian?
She put her white hands into mine, with such
A smile, and then passed on.

MELFI. Without a word?

LEANTI. Without a word, save the mute eloquence
Of that bright smile.

D'ALBA. [*Aside.*] Oh, 'twas enough! on him!
Smile on that dotard! Whilst I— [*Aloud.*] Why, my
lords,

Here's a fine natural sympathy; the son
Sickens at the father's wound! The very day!
The very hour! He must have known the deed—
Perhaps he knows the assassin—

MELFI. Stop.

D'ALBA. My liege,
I speak it in his honour. Many an heir
Had been right glad to step into a throne

Just as the mounting pulse of youth beat high ;—
A soldier too ! and with a bride so fair,
So delicate, so fashioned for a Queen
By cunning nature. But he—for full surely
He knew—

MELFI. Stop. No, no, no ; he knew it not !
He is my son.

Enter CALVI, followed by JULIAN.

CALVI. My liege, the Prince !

MELFI. Already !

Pardon me, good my lords, that I request
A moment's loneliness. We have been near
To death since last—Have touched upon the grave,
And there are thoughts, which only our own hearts
Should hear. I pray ye, pardon me. I'll join ye
Within the hour for the procession.

[Exeunt D'ALBA, LEANTI, VALORE, CALVI, &c.

Julian !

Approach ! Come nearer ! Speak to me !

JUL. My lord !

MELFI. Has he forgot to call me father !

JUL. Father !

MELFI. I know what thou would'st say. The hat
And sable plumes concealed—No more of it.

JUL. Oh, father !

MELFI. Rise, my son. Let us forget
What—How is Annabel ? They say she has been
A faithful nurse. Thou hast been sick ?

JUL. I'm well.

MELFI. Fie, when thou tremblest so.

JUL. I'm well ! I have been
Sick, brainsick, heartsick, mad. I thought—I feared—
It was a foretaste of the pains of hell

To be so mad and yet retain the sense
Of that which made me so. But thou art here,
And I—Oh, nothing but a father's heart
Could ever have forgiven!

MELFI. No more! No more!
Thou hast not told me of thy wife.

JUL. She waits
To pay her duty.

MELFI. Stay. Count D'Alba looked
With evil eyes upon thee, and on me
Cast his accustomed tauntings. Is there aught
Amis between ye?

JUL. No.

MELFI. He hath not yet,
Perhaps, forgotten your long rivalry
For Annabel's fair hand. A dangerous meaning
Lurked in those bitter gibes. A dangerous foe
Were D'Alba. Julian, the sea-breeze to thee
Brings health, and strength, and joy. I have an errand
As far as Madrid. None so well as thou
Can bid it speed. Thou shalt away to-day;—
'Tis thy best medicine;—thou and thy young wife.
The wind is fair.

JUL. To-day!

MELFI. Have I not said?

JUL. Send me just risen from a sick couch to Madrid!
Send me from home, from thee! Banish me! Father,
Canst thou not bear my sight?

MELFI. I cannot bear
Contention. Must I needs remind thee, Julian,
I also have been ill?

JUL. I'll go to-day.
How pale he is! I had not dared before
To look upon his face. I'll go to-day.

MELFI. This very hour ?

JUL. This very hour.

MELFI. My son !

Now call thy—yet a moment. Where's the boy—

He shall aboard with thee—thy pretty page ?

JUL. The King ? Mean'st thou the King ?

MELFI. He whom thou call'st—

JUL. Wilt thou not say the King ?

MELFI. Young Theodore.

Hearken, Prince Julian ! I am glad, right glad

Of what hath chanced. 'Twas well to bring him hither,

And keep him at thy side. He shall away

To Spain with thee, that Theodore—Forget

All other titles. He'll be glad of this.

A favourite page, a spoilt and petted boy,

To lie in summer gardens, in the shade

Of orange groves, whose pearly blossoms fall

Amidst his clustering curls, and to his lute

Sing tenderest ditties,—such his happy lot ;

Whilst I—Go, bring thy wife.

JUL. He is the King.

MELFI. Call Lady Annabel.

JUL. The King, I say,

The rightful King, the only King ! I'll shed

The last drop in my veins for King Alfonso.

MELFI. Once I forgave thee. But to beard me thus,

And for a weak and peevish youth, a faintling,

A boy of a girl's temper ; one who shrinks

Trembling and crouching at a look, a word,

A lifted finger, like a beaten hound.

JUL. Alas ! poor boy, he hath no other friend

Since thou, who should'st defend him—Father, father,

Three months have scarcely passed since thy dear brother,

(Oh, surely thou lovedst him !) with the last words

He ever spake, besought thy guardian care
Of his fair child. Next upon me he turned
His dying eyes, quite speechless then, and thou—
I could not speak, for poor Alfonso threw
Himself upon my breast, with such a gush
Of natural grief, I had no utterance—
But thou didst vow for both protection, faith,
Allegiance; thou didst swear so fervently,
So deeply, that the spirit flew to Heaven
Smiling. . I'll keep that oath.

MELFI. Even if again
Thy sword—

JUL. Urge not that on me. 'Tis a fire
Here in my heart, my brain. Bethink thee, father,
Soldier or statesman, thine is the first name
Of Sicily, the General, Regent, Prince,
The unmatch'd in power, the unapproach'd in fame;
What could that little word, a King, do more
For thee?

MELFI. That little word! Why *that* is fame,
And power, and glory! That shall fill the world,
Lend a whole age its name, and float along
The stream of time, with such a buoyancy,
As shall endure when palaces and tombs
Are swept away like dust. That little word!
Beshrew thy womanish heart that cannot feel
Its spell! [*Guns and shouts are heard without.*]

Hark ! hark ! the guns ! I feel it now.
I am proclaimed. Before I entered here
'Twas known throughout the city that I lived,
And the boy-king was dead.

[Guns, bells, and shouts again.]

Hark, King Rugiero!
Dost hear the bells and shouts? Oh, 'tis a proud

And glorious feeling thus at once to live
Within a thousand bounding hearts, to hear
The strong out-gushing of that present fame
For whose uncertain dim futurity
Men toil, and slay, and die! Without a crime—
I thank thee still for that—Without a crime—
For he'll be happier—I am a King. [*Shouts again.*]
Dost thou not hear, Long live the King Rugiero?

JUL. The shout is weak.

MELFI. Augment it by thy voice.
Would the words choke Prince Julian? Cannot he
Wish long life to his father?

JUL. Live, my father!
Long live the Duke of Melfi!

MELFI. Live the King!

JUL. Long live the King Alfonso!

MELFI. Now, by Heaven,
Thou art still brainsick. There is a contagion
In the soft dreamy nature of that child,
That thou, a soldier—I was overproud
Of thee and thy young fame. That lofty brow
Seem'd form'd to wear a crown. Chiefly for thee—
Where is the page?

JUL. Oh, father, once again
Take pity on us all! For me! For me!
Thou hast always been to me the kindest, fondest—
Preventing all my wishes—I'll not reason,
I'll not contend with thee. Here at thy feet,
Prostrate in spirit, as in form, I cry
For mercy! Save me from despair! from sin!

MELFI. Unmanly, rise! lest in that slavish posture
I treat thee as a slave.

JUL. Strike an thou wilt,
Thy words pierce deeper, to the very core!

Strike an thou wilt ; but hear me. Oh, my father,
I do conjure thee, by that name, by all
The boundless love it guerdons, spare my soul
This bitterness !

MELFI. I'll reign.

JUL. Ay, reign, indeed ;
Rule over mightier realms ; be conqueror
Of crowned passions ; king of thy own mind.
I've ever loved thee as a son, do this
And I shall worship thee. I will cling to thee ;
Thou shalt not shake me off.

MELFI. Go to ; thou art mad.

JUL. Not yet ; but thou may'st make me so.

MELFI. I'll make thee

The heir of a fair crown.

JUL. Not all the powers
Of all the earth can force upon my brow
That heritage of guilt. Cannot I die ?
But that were happiness. I'd rather drag
A weary life beneath the silent rule
Of the stern Trappist, digging my own grave,
Myself a living corse, cut off from the sweet
And natural kindness that man shows to man ;
I'd rather hang, a hermit, on the steep
Of horrid Etna, between snow and fire ;
Rather than sit a crown'd and honour'd prince
Guarded by children, tributaries, friends,
On an usurper's throne. [*Guns without.*]

MELFI. I must away.

We'll talk of this anon. Where is the boy ?

JUL. Safe.

MELFI. Trifle not with my impatience, Julian ;
Produce the child. Howe'er thou may deny
Allegiance to the king, obey thy father.

JUL. I had a father.

MELFI. Ha!

JUL. But he gave up
Faith, loyalty, and honour, and pure fame,
And his own son.

MELFI. My son!

JUL. I loved him once,
And dearly. Still too dearly! But with all
That burning, aching, passionate old love
Wrestling within my breast; even face to face;
Those eyes upon me; and that trembling hand
Thrilling my very heart strings—Take it off!
In mercy take it off!—Still I renounce thee.
Thou hast no son. I have no father. Go
Down to a childless grave.

MELFI. Even from the grave
A father's curse may reach thee, clinging to thee
Cold as a dead man's shroud, shadowing thy days,
Haunting thy dreams, and hanging, a thick cloud,
'Twixt thee and Heaven. Then, when perchance thine own
Small prattling pretty ones shall climb thy knee
And bid thee bless them, think of thy dead father,
And groan as thou dost now. [*Guns again.*]

Hark! 'tis the hour!

I must away. Back to thy chamber, son,
And choose if I shall curse thee. [*Exit MELFI.*]

JUL. Did he curse me?
Did he? Am I that withered, blasted wretch?
Is that the fire ~~that~~ burns my brain? Not yet!
Oh, do not curse me yet! He's gone. The boy!
The boy! [*Rushes out.*]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Magnificent Cathedral. A Gothic Monument in the Fore-ground, with Steps round it, and the Figure of an Old Warrior on the top.

D'ALBA, LEANTI, VALORE, CALVI, and other Nobles.

CALVI. Where stays the King?

LEANTI. He's robing to assume
The Crown.

CALVI. What a gloom reigns in the Cathedral!
Where are the people, who should make and grace
This pageant?

VALORE. 'Tis too sudden.

D'ALBA. Saw ye not
How coldly, as the slow procession moved,
Men's eyes were fixed upon him? Silently
We passed amidst dull silence. I could hear
The chink of money, which the heralds flung,
Reverberate on the pavement. They, who stooped
To gather up the coin, looked on the impress
Of young Alfonso, sighed and shook their heads

Nobles, hear that!—the Peasants' King and yours!
Look down, Ancestral Spirit, on my oath,
And sanctify and bless it! Now the crown.

D'ALBA. What noise is at the gate?

MELFI. Crown me, I say.

ARCHB. 'Tis fallen! Save us from the ill omen!

MELFI. Save us

From thy dull hands, old dotard! Thou a Priest,
And tremble at the touch of power! Give me
The crown.

D'ALBA. It fits thee not.

MELFI. Give me the crown,

And with a steady grasp it shall endue
These throbbing brows that burn till they be bound
With that bright diadem.

Enter JULIAN and ALFONSO.

JUL. Stop. Place it here!
This is the King! the real, the only King!
The living King Alfonso!

MELFI. Out, foul traitor!
'Tis an impostor.

JUL. Look on him, Count D'Alba;
Calvi, Valore, look! Ye know him well.
And ye that never saw him, know ye not
His father's lineaments? Remove thy hand
From that fair forehead. 'Tis the pallid brow
Bent into pensiveness, the dropping eyelid,
The womanish changing cheek—his very self!
Look on him. Do ye know him? Do ye own
Your King?

CALVI. 'Tis he.

D'ALBA. The boy himself!

JUL. Now place

The crown upon his head ; and hear me swear,
Low at his feet, as subject, kinsman, Prince,
Allegiance.

ALF. Rise, dear Cousin.

JUL. Father, kneel,
Kneel here with me, thou his first subject, thou
The guardian of the state, kneel first, and vow
Thy princely fealty.

MELFI. Hence, abject slave !
And thou, young minion—

JUL. *to ALF.* Fear not. Father, kneel !
Look where thou art. This is no place, my lord,
To dally with thy duty : underneath
Thy fathers sleep ; above their banners wave
Heavily. Death is round about us, Death
And Fame. Have they no voice for thee ? Not one
Of our long storied line but lived and died
A pure and faithful Knight, and left his son
Honour—proud heritage ! I am thine heir,
And I demand that bright inheritance
Unstained, undimmed. Kneel, I implore thee ! I,
Thy son.

MELFI Off, cursed viper
Off, ere I hurl thee on the stones !

JUL. I've done
My duty. Was it not my duty ?

ALF. Julian,
Sit here by me ; here on the steps.

D'ALBA. Again
We must demand of thee, my Lord of Melfi,
How chanced this tale of murder ? Here's our Prince,
Safe and unhurt. But where's the assassin ? Where
The regicide ? Where he that wounded thee ?

MELFI. [*Pointing to JULIAN.*] Demand of him.

D'ALBA. Where be these murderers?
Art sure thou saw'st them, Duke? Or was't a freak
Of the deft Fay Morgana? Didst thou feel
The trenchant blade? Or was the hurt thou talk'st of
A fairy wound, a phantasm? Once again
I warn thee, speak.

MELFI. Ask of Prince Julian, Sir,
This work is his.

D'ALBA. He speaks not. Little King,
What say'st thou?

ALF. Julian saved me.

D'ALBA. Saved! From whom?
From what?

ALF. A king should have no memory
But for good deeds. My lords, an it so please you,
We'll to the Palace. I'll not wear to-day
This crown. Some fitting season; but not now.
I'm weary. Let us home.

D'ALBA. Ay, take him hence.
Home with him, Count Valore. Stay by him
Till I come to ye. Leave him not. Nay, Calvi,
Remain. Hence with the boy.

ALF. My Cousin Julian,
Wilt thou not go with us?

JUL. I've done my duty.
Was't not my duty? But look there! look there!
I cannot go with thee. I am his now.
All his.

ALF. Uncle—

MELFI. Away, bright spotted worm—

D'ALBA. What, ho! the guard!

ALF. My lord, where Julian is
I need no guard. Question no more of this,
But follow us. [*Exeunt ALFONSO, VALORE, and other Nobles.*]

MELFI. I do condemn myself
That I hold silence. Warriors, kinsmen, friends,
Barons of Sicily, the valiant princes
Of this most fertile and thrice famous Isle,
Hear me ! What yonder crafty Count hath dared,
With subtle question and derisive smile,
To slide into a meaning, is as true
As he is false. I would be King ; I'd reign
Over fair Sicily ; I'd call myself
Your Sovereign, Princes ; thine, Count D'Alba, thine,
Calvi, and old Leanti—we were comrades
Many a year in the rough path of war.
And now ye know me all. I'll be a king
Fit for this warlike nation, which brooks sway
Only of men. Yon slight fair boy is born
With a woman's heart. Let him go tell his beads
For us and for our kingdom ; I'll be King.
I'll lend unto that title such a name,
As shall enchase this bauble with one blaze
Of honour. I'll lead on to glory, lords,
And ye shall shine in the brightness of my fame
As planets round the sun. What say ye ?

D'ALBA.

Never !

CALVI, &c. Never !

MELFI. Say thou, Leanti, thou'rt a soldier
Worthy of the name,—a brave one ! What say'st thou ?

LEANTI. If young Alfonso—

D'ALBA.

Peace. Why, this is well.

This morning I received a tale—I'm not
An over-believer in man's excellence ;
I know that in this slippery path of life
The firmest foot may fail ; that there have been
Ere now ambitious generals, grasping heirs,
Unnatural kinsmen, foul usurpers, murderers !—

I know that man is frail, and might have fallen
Though Eve had never lived.—Albeit I own
The smiling mischief's potency. But this,
This tale was made up of such several sins,
All of them devilish; treason, treachery,
And pitiless cruelty made murder pale
With their red shame,—I doubt not readily
When man and guilt are joined—but this the common
And general sympathy that links our kind
Forbade to believe. Yet now before you all,
His peers and mine, before the vacant throne
He sought to usurp, before the crown that fell
As conscious from his brow, I do arraign
Rugiero, Duke of Melfi, General, Peer,
Regent, and Prince, of Treason.

MELFI. Treason! D'Alba,
We quarrel not for words. Let these but follow
And bold emprise shall bear a happier name.
Sicilians, have ye lost your Island spirit?
Barons, is your ancient bravery tamed down
By this vain scoffer? I'll to the people. They
Love their old soldier.

D'ALBA. Stop. Duke, I arraign thee
Of murder; planned, designed, attempted murder,
Though incomplete, on the thrice sacred person
Of young Alfonso, kinsman, ward, and King.
Wilt thou defend this too? Was't a brave deed
To draw the assassin's sword on that poor child?
Seize him!

MELFI. Come near who dares! Where be thy proofs?
Where be thy witnesses?

D'ALBA. There's one. Prince Julian,
Rouse thee! He sits erect and motionless
As yon ancestral image. Doth he breathe?

Rouse thee, and answer, as before thy God,
As there is truth in Heaven, Didst thou not see
Thy father's sword at young Alfonso's breast?
Lay not the boy, already dead with fear,
At his false guardian's feet. Answer!

MELFI. Ay, speak,
Prince Julian! Dost thou falter now? On, on,
And drive the dagger home! On, on, I say.

CALVI. We wait your Highness' answer.

JUL. Which among ye
Dares question me? What are ye, Sirs?

D'ALBA. The States
Of Sicily.

JUL. The States! Without a head!
Without a King! Without a Regent! States!
The States! Are ye the States that 'gainst all form
Of justice or of guardian law drive on
To bloody trial him your greatest? Here too!
Here! Will ye build up scaffolds in your churches?
And turn grave priests to headsmen? I'll not answer.

CALVI. The rack may force thee.

D'ALBA. He but smiles. Convey
The Duke to the Hall of Justice. We shall follow.
Go summon Juan Castro thither. Hence!
Why loiter ye?

MELFI. A word with thee, Prince Julian.
I pray ye listen, 'tis no treason, lords.
I would but say, finish thy work. Play well
The part that thou hast chosen. Cast aside
All filial yearnings. Be a gallant foe.
Rush onward through the fight. Trample me down.
Tread on my neck. Be perfect in that quality
Which thou call'st justice. Quell thy womanish weak-
ness.

Let me respect the enemy, whom once
I thought my son.

JUL. Once, father!

MELFI. I'm no father!

Rouse not my soul to curse thee! Tempt me not
To curse thy mother,—She whom I once deemed
A saint in purity. Be resolute,
Palter not with them. Lie not.

JUL. Did I ever?

MELFI. Finish thy work. On, soldiers!

[Exit MELFI, guarded.]

D'ALBA. Answer, Prince!

The Duke, as thou hast heard, disclaims thee.

JUL. Dare not

A man of ye say that. I am his son—
Tremble lest my sword should prove me so;—a part
Of his own being. He gave me this life,
These senses, these affections. The quick blood
That knocks so strongly at my heart is his—
Would I might spill it for him! Had ye no fathers,
Had ye no sons, that ye would train men up
In parricide? I will not answer ye.

D'ALBA. This passion is thy answer. Couldst thou
say

No; in that simple word were more comprised
Than in a world of fiery eloquence.
Canst thou not utter No? 'Tis short and easy,
The first sound that a stuttering babe will lisp
To his fond nurse,—yet thy tongue stammers at it!
I ask him if his father be at once
Traitor and murderer, and he cannot say,
No!

JUL. Subtle, blood-thirsty fiend! I'll answer
To nought that thou canst ask. Murderer! The King

Lives. Seek of him. One truth I'll tell thee, D'Alba,
And then the record of that night shall pass
Down to the grave in silence. But one sword
Was stained with blood in yonder glen—'twas mine !
I am the only guilty. This I swear
Before the all-seeing God, whose quenchless gaze
Pierced through that twilight hour. Now condemn
The Duke of Melfi, an' ye dare ! I'll speak
No more on this foul question.

LEANTI. Thou the guilty ?
Thou !

JUL. I have said it.

D'ALBA. I had heard a tale—

LEANTI. This must be sifted.

D'ALBA. In that twilight hour
A mortal eye beheld them. An old Spaniard,
One of the guard—By Heaven, it is a tale
So bloody, so unnatural, man may scarce
Believe it !

LEANTI. And the King still lives.

D'ALBA. Why 'tis
A mystery. Let's to the Hall of Justice
And hear this soldier. Sir, they are ambitious,
Father and son—We can pass judgment there,
This is no place ;—Leanti, more ambitious
Than thou canst guess.

JUL. Ay, by a thousand-fold!
I am an eaglet born, and can drink in
The sunlight, when the blinking owls go darkling,
Dazzled and blinded by the day. Ambitious!
I have had day dreams would have shamed the visions
Of that great master of the world, who wept
For other worlds to conquer. I'd have lived
An age of sinless glory, and gone down

Storied and epitaphed and chronicled,
To the very end of time. Now—But I still
May suffer bravely, may die as a Prince,
A man. Ye go to judgment. Lords, remember
I am the only guilty.

CALVI. We must needs,
On such confession, give you into charge
A prisoner. Ho! Captain.

LEANTI. Goes he with us?

D'ALBA. No; for the hall is near, and they are best
Questioned apart. Walk by me, good Leanti,
And I will show thee why.

LEANTI. Is't possible
That Julian stabb'd his father?

D'ALBA. No. Thou saw'st
They met as friends; no! no!

[Exeunt CALVI and other Lords.]

Enter ANNABEL.

ANN. Where is he? Where?
Julian!

D'ALBA. Fair Princess—

ANN. Stay me not. My Julian!

D'ALBA. Oh, how she sinks her head upon his arm!
How her curls kiss his cheek! and her white hand
Lies upon his! The cold and sluggish husband!
He doth not clasp that loveliest hand, which nature
Fashioned to gather roses, or to hold
Bunches of bursting grapes.

LEANTI. Count D'Alba, see,
We are alone. Wilt thou not come?

D'ALBA. Anon.
Now he hath seized her hand, hath dared to grasp,
He shall not hold it long.

LEANTI. They'll wait us, Count.

D'ALBA. That white hand shall be mine.

[*Exeunt D'ALBA and LEANTI.*]

JUL. My Annabel,

Why art thou here?

ANN. They said—I was a fool
That believed them!—Constance said she heard a cry,
Down with the Melfi! and the rumour ran
That there had been a fray, that thou wast slain.
But thou art safe, my Julian.

JUL. As thou seest.
Thou art breathless still.

ANN. Ay. I flew through the streets,
Piercing the crowds like light. I was a fool;
But thou hadst left me on a sudden, bearing
The young Alfonso with thee, high resolve
Fixed in thine eye. I knew not—Love is fearful;
And I have learnt to fear.

JUL. Thou tremblest still.

ANN. The Church is cold and lonely; and that seat,
At the foot of yon grim warrior, all too damp
For thee. I like not thus to see thee, Julian,
Upon a tomb. Thou must submit thee still
To thy poor nurse. Home! By the way thou'lt tell me
What hath befallen. Where is Alfonso?

JUL. Say
The King! the rightful, the acknowledged King!
Annabel, this rude stone's the effigy
Of the founder of our line; the gallant chief
Who swept away the Saracen, and quelled
Fierce civil broils; and, when the people's choice
Crowned him, lived guardian of their rights, and died
Wept by them as a father. And methinks
To-day I do not shame my ancestor;

I dare to sit here at his feet, and feel
He would not spurn his son. Thou dost not grieve
To lose a crown, my fairest ?

ANN. Oh no ! no !
I'm only proud of thee. Thy fame's my crown.

JUL. Not fame but conscience is the enduring crown,
And wearing that impearled, why to lose fame
Or life were nothing.

ANN. Where's thy father, Julian ?
Forgive me, I have pained thee.

JUL. No. The pang
Is mastered. Where ? He is a prisoner
Before the States. I am a prisoner here.
These are my guards. Be calmer, Sweetest. Rend not
This holy place with shrieks.

ANN. They seek thy life !
They'll sentence thee ! They'll kill thee ! No ! they shall
not,

Unless they kill me first. What crime—O God,
To talk of crime and thee !—What falsest charge
Dare they to bring ?

JUL. Somewhat of yon sad night
They know.

ANN. Where's Theodore ? the page ? the King ?
Doth he accuse thee ?

JUL. He ! poor gentle Cousin !
He is as innocent as thou.

ANN. I'll fetch him.
We'll go together to the States. We'll save thee.
We, feeble though we be, woman and boy,
We'll save thee. Hold me not !

JUL. Where wouldst thou go ?

ANN. To the States.

JUL. And there ?

ANN. I'll tell the truth, the truth,
The irresistible truth! Let go. A moment
May cost thy life,—our lives. Nothing but truth,
That's all thy cause can need. Let go.

JUL. And he,
My father?

ANN. What's a thousand such as he,
To thee, my husband! But he shall be safe.
He is thy father. I'll say nought can harm him.
He was ever kind to me! I'll pray for him.
Nay, an thou fear'st me, Julian, I'll not speak
One word; I'll only kneel before them all,
Lift up my hands, and pray in my inmost heart,
As I pray to God.

JUL. My loving wife, to Him
Pray, to Him only. Leave me not, my dearest;
There is a peace around us in this pause,
This interval of torture. I'm content
And strong to suffer. Be thou—

Enter D'ALBA, CALVI, LEANTI, and Nobles.

Ha! returned
Already! This is quick. But I'm prepared.
The sentence!

ANN. Tell it not! Ye are his judges.
Ye have the power of life or death. Your words
Are fate. Oh, speak not yet! Listen to me.

D'ALBA. Ay; a long summer's day! What wouldst
thou?

ANN. Save him!
Save him!

D'ALBA. He shall not die.

ANN. Now bless thee, D'Alba!
Bless thee! He's safe! He's free!

JUL. Once more I ask
His doom, for that is mine. If ye have dared,
In mockery of justice, to arraign
And sentence your great ruler, with less pause
Than a petty thief taken in the manner, what's
Our doom ?

D'ALBA. Sir, our great ruler (we that love not
Law's tedious circumstance may thank him) spared
All trial by confession. He avowed
Treason and regicide; and all that thou
Hadst said or might say, he avouched unheard
For truth; then cried, as thou hast done, for judgment,
For death.

JUL. I can die too.

LEANTI. A milder doom
Unites ye. We have spared the royal blood.

D'ALBA. Only the blood. Estates and honours all
Are forfeit to the King; the assembled States
Banish ye; the most holy Church declares ye,
Beneath her ban. This is your sentence, Sir.
A herald waits to read it in the streets
Before ye, and from out the city gate
To thrust ye, outlawed, excommunicate,
Infamous amongst men. Ere noon to-morrow--
Ye must depart from Sicily; on pain
Of death to ye the outlaws, death to all
That harbour ye, death to whoe'er shall give
Food, shelter, comfort, speech. So pass ye forth
In infamy!

ANN. Eternal infamy
Rest on your heads, false judges ! Outlawed ! Banished !
Bereft of state and title ! Thou art still
Best of the good, greatest among the great,
My Julian ! Must they die that give thee food

And rest and comfort? I shall comfort thee,
I, thy true wife! I'll never leave thee. Never!
We'll walk together to the gate, my hand
In thine, as lovers. Let's set forth. We'll go
Together.

JUL. Ay; but not to-night. I'll meet thee
To-morrow at the harbour.

ANN. No! no! no!
I will not leave thee.

JUL. Cling not thus. She trembles.
She cannot walk. Brave Sir, we have been comrades;
There is a pity in thine eye which well
Beseems a soldier. Take this weeping lady
To King Alfonso. Tell the royal boy
One, who was once his cousin and his friend,
Commends her to him. Go. To-morrow, dearest,
We'll meet again. Now for the sentence. Lords,
I question not your power. I submit
To all, even to this shame. Be quick! be quick!

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Royal Palace.

D'ALBA, BERTONE.

D'ALBA. I've parted them at last. The livelong night
The little King lay, like a page, before
Her chamber door; and ever as he heard
A struggling sigh within, he cried, alas!
And echoed back her moan, and uttered words,
Of comfort. Happy boy!

BERT. But he is gone
Towards the gate: be sure to meet Prince Julian.

D'ALBA. For that I care not, so that I secure
The vision which once flitted from my grasp
And vanished like a rainbow.

BERT. Yet is Julian
Still dangerous.

D'ALBA. Why after noon to-day—
And see the sun's already high!—he dies

T.

If he be found in Sicily. Take thou
Two resolute comrades to pursue his steps,
Soon as the time be past. Didst thou not hear
The proclamation? Know'st thou where he bides?
And Melfi?

BERT. Good my lord, 'tis said the Duke
Is dead.

D'ALBA. Dead!

BERT. Certain 'tis that yesternight
He walked from out the Judgment Hall like one
Dreaming, with eyes that saw not, ears that heard
No sound, staggering and tottering like old age
Or infancy. And when the kingly robe
Was plucked from him, and he forced from the gate,
A deep wound in his side burst forth; the blood
Welled like a fountain.

D'ALBA. And he died?

BERT. He fell
Fainting; and Julian, who had tended him
Silently, with a spirit so absorbed
His own shame seemed unfelt, fell on his neck
Shrieking like maddening woman. There we left him,
And there 'tis said he hath outwatched the night.

D'ALBA. There on the ground?

BERT. So please you.

D'ALBA. Thou hast known

A softer couch, Prince Julian. Is the litter
Prepared? And the old groom?

BERT. My lord, he waits
Your pleasure.

D'ALBA. Call him hither. [Exit BERTONE.]

Blood welled out
From a deep wound! Said old Leanti sooth?
No matter. Either way he's guilty.

Re-enter BERTONE with RENZI.

Ha !

A reverend knave. Wast thou Prince Julian's huntsman ?

RENZI. An please you, Sir, I was.

D'ALBA. Dost know the Princess ?—

Doth she know thee ?

RENZI. Full well, my lord. I tended
Prince Julian's favourite greyhound. It was strange
How Lelia loved my lady,—the poor fool
Hath pined for her this week past,—and my lady
Loved Lelia. She would stroke her glossy head,
And note her sparkling eyes, and watch her gambols,
And talk of Lelia's beauty, Lelia's speed,
Till I was weary.

D'ALBA. And the angel deemed
This slave as faithful as her dog ! The better.
Dost thou love ducats, Renzi ?

[Tossing him a purse.

Canst thou grace

A lie with tongue and look and action ?

RENZI. Ay.

D'ALBA. Go to the Princess ; say thy master sent thee
To guide her to him, or the young Alfonso—
Use either name or both. Spare not for tears,
Or curses. Lead her to the litter ; see
That Constance follows not. Bertone 'll gain
Admittance for thee. Go.

[Exit RENZI.

Bertone, seek me

A supple churchman ;—Know'st thou any ? One
Not scrupulous ; one who loves gold, and laughs
At conscience. Bring him to me. I must hasten
Silently home. Let not the Princess guess

That I have left the palace.

BERT.

No, my Lord.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

*The Country just without the Gates of Messina.
A hilly Background.*

MELFI, *lying on the Stage*, JULIAN.

JUL. He wakes ! He is not dead ! I am not yet
A parricide. I dare not look on him ;
I dare not speak.

MELFI. Water ! My throat is scorched.

[*Exit JULIAN.*]

My tongue cleaves to my mouth. Water ! Will none
Go fetch me water ? Am I here alone ?
Here on the bloody ground, as on that night—
Am I there still ? No ! I remember now.
Yesterday I was King ; to-day I'm nothing ;
Cast down by my own son ; stabbed in my fame ;
Branded and done to death ; an outlaw where
I ruled ! He, whom I loved with such a pride,
With such a fondness, hath done this ; and I,
I have not strength to drag me to his presence
That I might rain down curses on his head,
Might blast him with a look.

Enter JULIAN.

JUL. Here's water. Drink !

MELFI. What voice is that ? Why dost thou shroud thy
face ?

Dost shame to show thyself ? Who art thou ?

JUL.

Drink !

I pray thee, drink !

MELFI. Is't poison ?

JUL. 'Tis the pure
And limpid gushing of a natural spring
Close by yon olive ground. A little child,
Who stood beside the fount, watching the bright
And many-coloured pebbles, as they seemed
To dance in the bubbling water, filled for me
Her beechen cup, with her small innocent hand,
And bade our Lady bless the draught ! Oh, drink !
Have faith in such a blessing.

MELFI. Thou shouldst bring
Nothing but poison. Hence, accursed cup !
I'll perish in my thirst. I know thee, Sir.

JUL. Father !

MELFI. I have no son. I had one once,
A gallant gentleman ; but he—What, Sir,
Didst thou never hear of that Sicilian Prince,
Who made the fabulous tale of Greece a truth,
And slew his father ? The old Laius fell
At once, unknowing and unknown ; but this
New Œdipus, he stabbed and stabbed and stabbed,
And the poor wretch cannot die.

JUL. I think my heart
Is iron that it breaks not.

MELFI. I should curse him—
And yet—Dost thou not know that I'm an outlaw,
Under the ban ? They stand in danger, Sir,
That talk to me.

JUL. I am an outlaw too.
Thy fate is mine. Our sentence is alike.

MELFI. What have they banished thee ?

JUL. I should have gone,
In very truth, I should have gone with thee,

Ay, to the end of the world.

MELFI. What banish thee !

Oh, foul ingratitude ! Weak changeling boy !

JUL. He knows it not. Father, this banishment
Came as a comfort to me, set me free
From warring duties and fatiguing cares,
And left me wholly thine. We shall be happy ;
For she goes with us, who will prop thy steps,
As once the maid of Thebes, Antigone,
In that old tale. Choose thou whatever land—
All are alike to us. But pardon me !
Say thou hast pardoned me !

MELFI. My virtuous son !

JUL. Oh, thanks to thee and Heaven ! He sinks ; he's
faint ;

His lips wax pale. I'll seek the spring once more ;
'Tis thirst.

MELFI. What music's that ?

JUL. I hear none.

MELFI. Hark !

JUL. Thou art weak and dizzy.

MELFI. Angels of the air,
Cherub and Seraph sometimes watch around
The dying, and the mortal sense, at pause,
'Twixt life and death, doth drink in a faint echo
Of heavenly harpings !

JUL. I have heard so.

MELFI. Ay ;

But they were just men, Julian ! They were holy.
They were not traitors.

JUL. Strive against these thoughts—
Thou wast a brave man, father !—fight against them,
As 'gainst the Paynims thy old foes. He grows
Paler and paler. Water from the spring ;

Or generous wine ; I saw a cottage near.

Rest thee, dear father, till I come.

[*Exit JULIAN.*]

MELFI.

Again

That music ! It is mortal ; it draws nearer.

No. But if men should pass must I lie here

Like a crushed adder ? Here in the highway

Trampled beneath their feet ?—So ! So ! I'll crawl

To yonder bank. Oh, that it were the deck

Of some great Admiral, and I alone

Boarding amidst a hundred swords ! the breach

Of some strong citadel, and I the first

To mount in the cannon's mouth ! I was brave once.

Oh, for the common undistinguished death

Of battle, pressed by horses' heels, or crushed

By falling towers ! Anything but to lie

Here like a leper !

Enter ALFONSO, VALORE, and CALVI.

ALF.

'Tis the spot where Julian—

And yet I see him not, I'll pause awhile ;

'Tis likely he'll return. I'll wait.

CALVI.

My liege

You're sad to-day.

ALF.

I have good cause to be so.

VALORE. Nay, nay, cheer up.

ALF.

Didst thou not tell me, Sir,

That my poor uncle's banished, outlawed, laid

Under the Church's ban ?

CALVI.

He would have slain

His Sovereign.

ALF.

I ne'er said it. Yesterday

I found you at his feet. Oh, would to Heaven

The crown were on his head, and I—What's that ?

VAL. The moaning wind.

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CALVI.

He was a traitor, Sire.

ALF. He was my kinsman still. And Julian ! Julian !
 My Cousin Julian ! he who saved my life,
 Whose only crime it was to be too good,
 Too great, too well beloved,—to banish him !
 To tear him from my arms !

CALVI.

Sire, he confessed—

ALF. Ye should have questioned me. Sirs, I'm a boy,
 A powerless, friendless boy, whose name is used
 To cover foul oppression. If I live
 To grasp a sword—but ye will break my heart
 Before that hour. Whence come those groans ?

[Seeing MELFI.

My uncle

Stretched on the ground, and none to tend thee ! Rest
 Thy head upon my arm. Where's Julian ? Sure
 I thought to find him with thee. Nay, be still ;
 Strive not to move.

MELFI.

I fain would kneel to thee

For pardon.

CALVI. Listen not, my liege. The States
 Sentenced the Duke of Melfi ; thou hast not
 The power to pardon. Leave him to his fate.

VAL. 'Twere best your Highness came with us.

ALF.

Avoid

The place ! Leave us, cold, courtly lords. Avoid
 My sight ! Leave us, I say. Send instant succour,
 Food, water, wine, and men with hearts, if courts
 May breed such. Leave us. [Exit CALVI and VALORE.

MELFI.

Gallant boy !

ALF.

Alas !

I have no power.

MELFI. For all I need thou hast.

Give me but six feet of Sicilian earth,

And thy sweet pardon.

ALF. Talk not thus. I'll grow
At once into a man, into a king,
And they shall tremble, and turn pale with fear,
Who now have dared—

Enter JULIAN.

Julian !

JUL. Here's water ! Ha !
Alfonso ! I thought Pity had been dead.
I craved a little wine, for the dear love
Of Heaven, for a poor dying man ; and all
Turned from my prayer. Drink, father.

ALF. I have sent
For succour.

JUL. Gentle heart !

MELFI. The time is past.
Music again.

ALF. Ay ; 'tis the shepherd's pipe
From yonder craggy mountain. How it swings
Upon the wind, now pausing, now renewed,
Regular as a bell.

MELFI. A passing bell.

ALF. Cast off these heavy thoughts.

MELFI. Turn me.

ALF. He bleeds !
The blood wells out.

MELFI. It eases me.

JUL. He sinks !
He dies ! Off ! he's my father. Rest on me.

MELFI. Bless thee.

JUL. Oh no ! no ! no ! I cannot bear
Thy blessing. Twice to stab, and twice forgiven—
Oh, curse me rather !

MELFI.

Bless ye both.

[Dies.

ALF.

He's dead,

And surely he died penitent. That thought
Hath in it a deep comfort. The freed spirit
Gushed out in a full tide of pardoning love.
He blest us both, my Julian; even me
As I had been his son. We'll pray for him
Together, and thy Annabel shall join
Her purest orisons. I left her stretched
In a deep slumber. All night long she watched
And wept for him and thee; but now she sleeps.
Shall I go fetch her? She, better than I,
Would soothe thee. Dost thou hear? He writhes as though
The struggling grief would choke him. Rouse thee, Julian,
Calm thee. Thou frighten'st me.

JUL.

Am I not calm?

There is my sword. Go.

ALF.

I'll not leave thee.

JUL.

King!

Dost thou not see we've killed him? Thou had'st cause;
But I, that was his son.—Home to thy palace!
Home!

ALF. Let me stay beside thee; I'll not speak,
Nor look, nor move. Let me but sit and drop
Tear for tear with thee.

JUL.

Go.

ALF.

My Cousin Julian—

JUL. Madden me not. I'm excommunicate,

An exile, and an outlaw, but a man.
Grant me the human privilege to weep
Alone o'er my dead father. King, I saved
Thy life. Repay me now a thousand-fold—
Go.

ALF. Ay; for a sweet comforter.

Enter PAOLO.

PAOLO. My liege,
The lady Annabel—

JUL. What ? is she dead ?
Have I killed her ?

ALF. Speak, Paolo. In thy charge
I left her.

JUL. Is she dead ?

PAOLO. No. Heaven forfend !
But she hath left the palace.

JUL. 'Tis the curse
Of blood that's on my head ; on all I love.
She's lost.

ALF. Did she go forth alone ?

PAOLO. My liege,
Prince Julian's aged huntsman, Renzi, came,
Sent, as he said, by thee, to bear her where
Her lord was sheltered.

JUL. Hoary traitor !

PAOLO. She
Followed him nothing fearing ; and I too
Had gone, but D'Alba's servants closed the gates,
And then my heart misgave me.

JUL. Where's my sword ?
I'll rescue her ! I'll save her !

ALF. Hast thou traced
Thy lady ?

PAOLO. No, my liege, but much I fear—
Certain a closed and guarded litter took
The way to the western suburb.

JUL. There, where lies
The palace of Count D'Alba ! Stained—defiled—
He hath thee now, my lovely one ! There's still

A way—Let me but reach thee ! One asylum—
 One bridal bed—One resting place. All griefs
 Are lost in this. Oh, would I lay as thou,
 My father ! Leave him not in the highway
 For dogs to mangle. He was once a Prince.
 Farewell !

ALF. Let me go with thee.

JUL. No. This deed
 Is mine. [Exit JULIAN.

ALF. Paolo, stay by the corse. I'll after,
 He shall not on this desperate quest alone.

PAOLO. Rather, my liege, seek D'Alba :—As I deem
 He still is at thy palace. Watch him well.
 Stay by him closely. So may the sweet lady
 Be rescued, and Prince Julian saved.

ALF. Thou'rt right.
 [Exeunt.

SCENE III.

An Apartment in an old Tower ; a rich Gothic Window, closed, but so constructed as that the Light may be thrown in, near it a small arched Door, beyond which is seen an Inner Chamber, with an open Casement.—ANNABEL is borne in by D'ALBA and Guards, through a strong Iron Door in the side Scene.

D'ALBA, ANNABEL, Guards.

D'ALBA. Leave her with me. Guard well the gate ; and
 watch
 That none approach the tower. [Exeunt Guards.

Fair Annabel !

ANN. Who is it calls ? Where am I ? Who art thou ?
 Why am I here ? Now Heaven preserve me, D'Alba !

Where's Julian? Where's Prince Julian? Where's my husband?

Renzi, who lured me from the palace, swore
It was to meet my husband.

D'ALBA. Many an oath
First sworn in falsehood turns to truth. He's here.
Calm thee, sweet lady.

ANN. Where? I see him not.
Julian!

D'ALBA. Another husband.

ANN. Then he's dead!
He's dead!

D'ALBA. He lives.

ANN. Heard I aright? Again!
There is a deafening murmur in mine ears,
Like the moaning sound that dwells in the sea shell,
So that I hear nought plainly. Say't again.

D'ALBA. He lives.

ANN. Now thanks to Heaven! Take me to him.
Where am I?

D'ALBA. In an old and lonely tower
At the end of my poor orchard.

ANN. Take me home.

D'ALBA. Thou hast no home.

ANN. No home! His arms! his heart!
Take me to him.

D'ALBA. Sweet Annabel, be still.
Conquer this woman's vain impatience,
And listen. Why she trembles as I were
Some bravo. Oh! that man's free heart should bow
To a fair cowardice! Listen. Thou know'st
The sentence of the Melfi?

ANN. Ay, the unjust
And wicked doom that ranked the innocent

With the guilty. But I murmur not. I love
To suffer with him.

D'ALBA. He is banished ; outlawed ;
Cut off from every human tie ;—

ANN. Not all.
I am his wife.

D'ALBA. Under the Church's ban.
I tell thee, Annabel, that learned priest,
The sage Anselmo, deems thou art released
From thy unhappy vows ; and will to-night—

ANN. Stop. I was wedded in the light of day
In the great church at Naples. Blessed day !
I am his wife, bound to him evermore
In sickness, penury, disgrace. Count D'Alba,
Thou dost misprize the world, but thou must know
That woman's heart is faithful, and clings closest
In misery.

D'ALBA. If the Church proclaim thee free—

ANN. Sir, I will not be free ; and if I were,
I'd give myself to Julian o'er again—
Only to Julian ! Trifle thus no longer.
Lead me to him. Release me.

D'ALBA. Now, by Heaven,
I'll bend this glorious constancy. I've known thee
Even from a little child, and I have seen
That stubborn spirit broken : not by fear,
That thou canst quell ; nor interest ; nor ambition ;
But love ! love ! love ! I tell thee, Annabel,
One whom thou lov'st, stands in my danger. Wed me
This very night—I will procure a priest
And dispensations, there shall nothing lack
Of nuptial form—Wed me, or look to hear
Of bloody justice.

ANN. My poor father, Melfi !

D'ALBA. The Regent? He is dead.

ANN. God hath been merciful.

D'ALBA. Is there no other name? no dearer?

ANN. Ha!

D'ALBA. Hadst thou such tender love for this proud
father,

Who little recked of thee, or thy fair looks;

Is all beside forgotten?

ANN. Speak!

D'ALBA. Why, Julian!

Julian, I say!

ANN. He is beyond thy power.

Thanks, thanks, great God! He's ruined, exiled, stripped

Of name, and land, and titles. He's as dead.

Thou hast no power to harm him. He can fall

No deeper. Earth hath not a lowlier state

Than princely Julian fills.

D'ALBA. Doth not the grave
Lie deeper?

ANN. What? But thou hast not the power!

Hast thou? Thou canst not. Oh, be pitiful!

Speak, I conjure thee, speak!

D'ALBA. Didst thou not hear

That he was exiled, outlawed, banished far

From the Sicilian Isles, on pain of death,

If, after noon to-day, he e'er were seen

In Sicily? The allotted bark awaits;

The hour is past; and he is here.

ANN. Now Heaven

Have mercy on us! D'Alba, at thy feet,

Upon my bended knees—Oh, pity! pity!

Pity and pardon! I'll not rise. I cannot.

I cannot stand more than a creeping worm

Whilst Julian's in thy danger. Pardon him!

Thou wast not cruel once. I've seen thee turn
Thy step from off the path to spare an insect ;
I've marked thee shudder, when my falcon struck
A panting bird ;—though thou hast tried to sneer
At thy own sympathy. D'Alba, thy heart
Is kinder than thou knowest. Save him, D'Alba !
Save him !

D'ALBA. Be mine.

ANN. Am I not his ?

D'ALBA. Be mine ;
And he shall live to the whole age of man
Unharmed.

ANN. I'm his—Oh, spare him !—Only his.

D'ALBA. Then it is thou that dost enforce the law
On Julian ; thou, his loving wife, that guid'st
The officer to seize him where he lies
Upon his father's corse ; thou that dost lead
Thy husband to the scaffold ; thou his wife,
His loving wife ! Thou yet may'st rescue him.

ANN. Now, God forgive thee, man ! Thou torturest me
Worse than a thousand racks. But thou art not
So devilish, D'Alba. Thou hast talked of love ;
Would'st see me die here at thy feet ? Have mercy !

D'ALBA. Mercy ! Ay, such as thou hast shown to me
Through weeks and months and years. I was born strong
In scorn, the wise man's passion. I had lived
Aloof from the juggling world, and with a shrug
Watched the poor puppets ape their several parts ;
Fool, knave, or madman ; till thy fatal charms,
Beautiful mischief, made me knave and fool
And madman ; brought revenge and love and hate
Into my soul. I love and hate thee, lady,
And doubly hate myself for loving thee.
But, by this teeming earth, this starry Heaven,

And by thyself the fairest, stubbornest thing
The fair stars shine upon, I swear to-night
Thou shalt be mine. If willingly, I'll save
Prince Julian; but still mine. Speak. Shall he live?
Canst thou not speak? Wilt thou not save him?

ANN.

No.

D'ALBA. Did she die with the word! Dost hear me,
lady?

I asked thee wouldst thou save thy husband?

ANN.

No.

Not so! Not so!

D'ALBA.

'Tis well.

[*Exit D'ALBA.*

ANN.

Stay! Stay! He's gone.

Count D'Alba! Save him! Save him! D'Alba's gone,

And I have sentenced him.

[*After a pause.*

He would have chosen so,

Would rather have died a thousand deaths than so

Have lived! Oh, who will succour me, shut up

In this lone tower! none but those horrid guards,

And yonder hoary traitor, know where the poor,

Poor Annabel is hidden; no man cares

How she may perish—only one—and he—

Preserve my wits! I'll count my beads! 'twill calm me:

What if I hang my rosary from the casement?

There is a brightness in the gorgeous jewel

To catch men's eyes, and haply some may pass

That are not pitiless. This window's closed;

But in yon chamber—Ah, 'tis open! There

I'll hang the holy gem, a guiding star,

A visible prayer to man and God. Oh, save me

From sin and shame! Save him! I'll hang it there.

[*Exit.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The same as the last ; the arched Door nearly closed.

ANNABEL.

ANN. I cannot rest. I wander to and fro
Within my dreary prison, as to seek
For comfort and find none. Each hour hath killed
A hope that seemed the last. The shadows point
Upward. The sun is sinking. Guard me, Heaven,
Through this dread night! [*A gun is heard without.*]

What evil sound—All sounds
Are evil here! Is there some murder doing?
Or wantonly in sport—

Enter JULIAN through the arched Door.

JUL. Annabel!

ANN. Julian!

JUL. My wife! Art thou still mine?

ANN. Thine own.

JUL. She smiles!

She clings to me! her eyes are fixed on mine

With the old love, the old divinest look
Of innocence! It is yet time. She's pure!
She's undefiled!—Speak to me, Annabel.
Tremble not so.

ANN. 'Tis joy. Oh, I have been
So wretched! And to see thee when I thought
We ne'er should meet again! How didst thou find me?

JUL. The rosary! the blessed rosary
Shone in the sun-beam, like a beacon fire,
A guiding star! Thrice holy was its light
That led me here to save—

ANN. Oh, blessings on thee!
How? where? what way? The iron door is barred!
Where didst thou enter, Julian?

JUL. Through the casement
Of yonder chamber.

ANN. What? that grim ascent!
That awful depth! Didst thou dare this for me?
And must I?—But I fear not. I'll go with thee.
I'm safe of foot, and light. I'll go.

JUL. Thou canst not.

ANN. Then go thyself, or he will find thee here,
He and his ruffian band. Let us part now.
Kiss me again. Fly, fly from Sicily!
That fearful man—but he is all one lie—
Told me thy life was forfeited.

JUL. He told thee
A truth.

ANN. Oh, fly! fly! fly!

JUL. My Annabel,
The bloodhounds that he laid upon the scent
Have tracked me hither. Didst thou hear a gun?
For once the ball passed harmless.

ANN. Art thou hurt?

Art sure thou art not ?

JUL. Yes, but they who aimed
That death are on the watch. Their quarry's lodged.
We can escape them—one way—only one !

ANN. How ? What way ?

JUL. Ask not.

ANN. Whither ?

JUL. To—my father.

ANN. Then he's alive—Oh, happiness ! They told me
That he was dead. Why do we loiter here ?
Let's join him now.

JUL. Not yet.

ANN. Now ! now ! Thou know'st not
How horribly these walls do picture to me
The several agonies whereof my soul
Hath drunk to-day. I have been tempted, Julian,
By one—a fiend ! tempted till I almost thought
God had forsaken me. But thou art here
To save me, and my pulse beats high again
With love and hope. I am light-hearted now,
And could laugh like a child—only these walls
Do crowd around me with a visible weight,
A palpable pressure ; giving back the forms
Of wildest thoughts that wandered through my brain,
Bright chattering Madness, and sedate Despair,
And Fear the Great Unreal !—Take me hence !
Take me away with thee !

JUL. Not yet, not yet.
Thou sweetest wretch ! I cannot—Dotard ! Fool !
I must. Not yet ! not yet !—Talk to me, Annabel ;
This is the hour when thou wast wont to make
Earth Heaven with lovely words ; the sunset hour,
That woke thy spirit into joy. Once more
Talk to me, Annabel.

ANN. Ay, all day long
When we are free. Thy voice is choked; thy looks
Are not on me; thy hand doth catch and twitch
And grasp mine painfully,—that gentle hand!

JUL. O God! O God! that right hand!—kiss it not!
Take thy lips from it!

ANN. Canst thou save me, Julian?
Thou always dost speak truth. Canst save thyself?
Shall we go hence together?

JUL. Ay, one fate—
One home.

ANN. Why that is bliss. We shall be poor—
Shall we not, Julian? I shall have a joy
I never looked for; I shall work for thee,
Shall tend thee, be thy page, thy squire, thy all,—
Shall I not, Julian?

JUL. Annabel, look forth
Upon this glorious world! Look once again
On our fair Sicily, lit by that sun
Whose level beams do cast a golden shine
On sea, and shore, and city, on the pride
Of bowery groves; on Etna's smouldering top;—
Oh, bright and glorious world! and thou of all
Created things most glorious, tricked in light,
As the stars that live in heaven!

ANN. Why dost thou gaze
So sadly on me?

JUL. The bright stars, how oft
They fall, or seem to fall! The Sun—look! look!
He sinks, he sets in glory. Blessed orb,
Like thee—like thee—Dost thou remember once
We sate by the sea-shore when all the heaven
And all the ocean seemed one glow of fire

Red, purple, saffron, melted into one
Intense and ardent flame, the doubtful line
Where sea and sky should meet was lost in that
Continuous brightness ; there we sate and talked
Of the mysterious union that blest orb
Wrought between earth and heaven, of life and death—
High mysteries !—and thou didst wish thyself
A spirit sailing in that flood of light
Straight to the Eternal Gates, didst pray to pass
Away in such a glory. Annabel !
Look out upon the burning sky, the sea
One lucid ruby—'tis the very hour !
Thou'lt be a seraph at the Fount of Light
Before—

ANN. What, must I die ? And wilt thou kill me ?
Canst thou ? Thou cam'st to save—

JUL. To save thy honour !
I shall die with thee.

ANN. Oh no ! no ! live ! live !
If I must die—Oh, it is sweet to live,
To breathe, to move, to feel the throbbing blood
Beat in the veins,—to look on such an earth
And such a heaven,—to look on thee ! Young life
Is very dear.

JUL. Wouldst live for D'Alba ?

ANN. No !
I had forgot. I'll die. Quick ! Quick !

JUL. One kiss !
Angel, dost thou forgive me ?

ANN. Yes.

JUL. My sword !—
I cannot draw it.

ANN. Now ! I'm ready.

Enter BERTONE, and two Murderers.

BERT.

Seize him !

Yield thee, Prince Julian ! Yield thee ! Seize the lady.

JUL. Oh, fatal, fond delay! Dare not come near us!
Stand off! I'll guard thee, sweet. But when I fall,
Let him not triumph.

BERT.

Yield thee. Strike him down.

JUL. Thou canst die then, my fairest.

[The two Murderers have now advanced close to JULIAN.]

BERT.

Now !

[*One of the Murderers strikes at JULIAN with his sword ;*

ANNABEL rushes before him, receives the wound aimed at him, and falls at his feet.

ANN. (*Before she is wounded.*) For thee!

(Then after.)

For thee !

'Tis sweet !

[Dies.]

JUL. Fiend, hast thou slain her? Die! die! die!

Come on.

[Fights and kills him.]

BERT. Call instant help! Hasten the Count!

[*Exit the other Murderer.*]

JULIAN *and BERTONE fight, and JULIAN kills him.*

JUL.

My wife !

My murdered wife! Doth she not breathe? I thought—

My sight is dim—Oh no! she's pale! she's cold!

She's still! If she were living she would speak

To comfort me. She's mute ! she's stiff ! she's—dead !

Why do I shiver at the word, that am

Death's factor, peopler of unhallowed graves,

Slayer of all my race ! not thee ! not thee !

God, in his mercy, guided the keen sword

To thy white bosom,—I could not. Lie there.

I'll shroud thee in my mantle.

[Covering her with it.

The rude earth
 Will veil thy beauty next. One kiss!—She died
 To save me.—One kiss, Annabel! I slew
 The slave that killed thee,—but the fiend, the cause—
 Is he not coming?—I will chain in life
 Till I've avenged thee; I could slay an army
 Now in my strong despair. But that were mercy.
 He must wear daggers in his heart. He loved her;—
 I'll feed his hopes—and then—Ay—ha! ha! ha!
 That will be a revenge to make the fiends
 Laugh—ha! ha! ha! I'll wrap me in this cloak,

[Taking one belonging to the dead bravo.]

And in the twilight—So!—He will not know
 My voice—it frightens me!—I have not hidden
 Thee quite, my Annabel! There is one tress
 Floating in springy grace—as if—she's dead!
 She's dead! I must not gaze, for then my heart
 Will break before its time. He comes. The stairs
 Groan at his pressure.

Enter D'ALBA.

D'ALBA (entering, to an Attendant.)

Back, and watch the gate!—

All's tranquil. Where's the traitor?

JUL.

Dead.

D'ALBA.

Who slew him?

JUL. I.

D'ALBA. And the lady,—where is she?

JUL.

At rest.

D'ALBA. Fair Gentleness! After this perilous storm
 She needs must lack repose. I'll wait her here.
 Friend! thou hast done good service to the state
 And me; we're not ungrateful. Julian's sword

**Fails him not often ; and the slave who fled
Proclaimed him Victor.**

JUL. **He slew two.**

D'ALBA. And thou
Slew'st him? Ay, there he lies in the ermined cloak
Of royalty, his haughty shroud! Six ells
Of rude uncostly linen serves to wrap
Your common corse; but this man was born swathed
In regal purple; lived so; and so died.
So be he buried. Let not mine enemy
Call me ungenerous. Roll him in his ermine
And dig a hole without the city gate
For him and the proud Regent. Quick! I'd have
The funeral speedy. Ah! the slaughtering sword
Lies by him, brown with clotted gore. Hence! hence!
And drag the carrion with thee.

JUL. Wilt thou not
Look on the corse?

D'ALBA. I cannot wait her waking.
I must go feast my eyes on her fair looks—
Divinest Annabel! My widowed bride!—
Where is she?

JUL. (*Uncovering the body.*) There. Now gaze thyself to
hell!

Gloat with hot love upon that beauteous dust !
She's safe ! She's dead !

D'ALBA. Julian!

JUL. But touch her not—
She's mine.

D'ALBA. Oh, perfectest and loveliest thing!
Eternal curses rest upon his head
Who murdered thee!

JUL. Off! off! Pollute her not!
She's white! She's pure!—Curses! Pour curse for curse

On the foul murderer! On him who turned
 The sweet soul from her home, who slew her father,
 Hunted her husband as a beast of prey,
 Pursued, imprisoned, lusted, left no gate
 Open save that to Heaven!—Off! gaze not on her!
 Thy look is profanation.

Enter ALFONSO, LEANTI, VALORE, &c.

ALF. [*Entering.*] Here, Leanti!

This way! Oh, sight of horror! Julian! Julian!

VAL. The Princess dead! Why, D'Alba—

LEANTI. Seize him, guards.

Lead him before the States. This bloody scene
 Calls for deep vengeance.

D'ALBA. If I were not weary
 Of a world that sweats under a load of fools—
 Old creaking vanes that turn as the wind changes—
 Lords, I'd defy ye! I'd live on for ever!
 And I defy ye now. For she is gone—
 The glorious vision! and the Patriarch's years
 Were valueless. Do with me as ye will.
 Ye cannot call back her.

LEANTI. Off with him!

[*Exit D'ALBA guarded.*]

ALF. Julian!

Wilt thou not speak?

JUL. I have been thanking Heaven

That she is dead.

VAL. His wits are gone.

ALF. My Julian,

Look on me. Dost thou know me? I'm thy Cousin,
 Thy comforter.

JUL. She was my Comforter!

And now—But I do know thee; thou'rt the King;

The pretty boy I loved—She loved thee too !
I'm glad thou'rt come to close my eyes. Draw nearer
That I may see thy face. Where art thou ?

ALF.

Here !

JUL. Poor child, he weeps ! Send for the honoured dead
Beside the city gate—he pardoned me !
Bury us in one grave—all in one grave !
I did not kill her. Strew her with white flowers,
For she was innocent.

LEANTI.

Cheer thee ! Take hope !

VAL. Raise up his head.

ALF.

My Julian !

JUL.

He forgave me—

Thou know'st he did !—White flowers ! Nothing but white !

[Dies.

LEANTI. He's gone !

ALF.

And I am left in the wide world

Alone. My Julian !

EPILOGUE,

WRITTEN BY T. N. TALFOURD, ESQ.

SPOKEN BY MRS. CHATTERLEY.

Is not her lot intolerably hard
Who does this pious office for the bard ?
Who comes applauses not her own to win,
Or pay the penance for another's sin ?
To tack, lest gentle moralisers rail,
A drawling comment to a doubtful tale ;
To break with hollow mirth the sacred spell
Which the poor poet rarely weaves too well ;
Or if his sorrows haplessly are laugh'd at,
Look grave for wit to throw his closing shaft at,
Methinks our Author's sex you shrewdly guess—
“It is a lady's drama”—frankly “yes.”
Yet let no censure on her daring fall,
When all “Life's idle business” is—to scrawl ;
Our tender bosoms learn in songs to melt,
And send their griefs to press—as soon as felt ;

No thought in lone obscurity decays,
But dies away in neatly published lays ;
No tender hope can bloom and fade unseen,
It leaves its fragrance—in a magazine ;
The bashful heart, whom deep emotions bless,
Hides its soft secrets in the daily press ;
With hints of well-assum'd despair beguiles,
And execrates mankind to win their smiles ;
A woman sure may claim no small compassion,
Who has this plea—she's only in the fashion.
O, if the fair's prerogative it be
To watch supreme o'er calumny and tea ;
To slay an Author's hopes with daintiest sneers,
And change the fates of poets as of peers ;
Regard not *her* unwomanly who seeks
To draw down sacred tears o'er beauty's cheeks,
Who for her sex, by artless scenes, would keep
Its dearest right—to weep with those that weep ;
Who if to-night her humble Muse hath brought
To some sad heart a train of gentle thought ;
On some warm spirit shed that blest relief,
A generous sympathy with kindred grief,
With joy returns to life's secluded ways,
And asks no recompense of noisier praise.

CHARLES THE FIRST:

AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

In five Acts.

VOL. I.

M

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

IN the following Play I have, without any such praiseworthy intention on my own part, obeyed to the very letter the well-known Horatian precept—
“keep your piece nine years!”

The attempt to dramatize one of the most striking events in English History, and to delineate one of the most remarkable characters that ever figured on the great Theatre of Life, was originally suggested to me by Mr. Macready, whose earnest recommendation to try my hand on Cromwell, was at a subsequent period still more strongly enforced by Mr. Charles Kemble; neither of these gentlemen, whose judgment in dramatic affairs will hardly be disputed, having foreseen any objection to such an experiment on the part of the Licensor or the Lord Chamberlain. How indeed could they have anticipated any obstacle

from that quarter, when an acted Tragedy on the same story and bearing the same title, written above sixty years ago by Mr. Havard, and frequently played in by John Kemble, was already in possession of the stage, and might have been performed without let or hindrance on any night at any Theatre whether in Town or Country ?

Unforeseen as it was, however, such an obstacle unfortunately arose. Mr. Colman did object, not to the details or the execution of the piece, but to the title and the subject ; and as the Duke of Montrose, the then Lord Chamberlain, confirmed the decision of his "Reader of Plays" we submitted to the fiat without complaint, though not without remonstrance ; and the Tragedy, instead of being produced at Covent Garden eight seasons ago, has remained unacted and unpublished, with little apparent chance of representation, until the spirited Managers of the Victoria Theatre applied to me for permission to bring it forward on a stage honourably distinguished, in this age of opera and spectacle, by its encouragement of the legitimate drama.

In acceding to their proposal, I beg most earnestly and sincerely to disavow having been influenced by anything like a spirit of defiance towards the Licensor or his office. To the present Lord Chamberlain the whole theatrical world, and I myself more particularly, owe nothing but respect and gratitude. Under his administration a similar case can hardly occur ; since,

however a characteristic delicacy might have withheld him from rescinding a declared resolution or nullifying a positive decree of his noble predecessor, the Duke of Devonshire is too eminent for liberality and kindness, too tasteful and enlightened a patron of the acted Drama to be led by the fear of an imaginary danger into placing fetters and shackles on an art which he loves. He is far more likely to foster and cherish an attempt to pursue, at humble distance, the track of those master poets of all countries, who, from the first Tragedy of Æschylus down to this very hour, have found the subjects of their noblest plays in the heart-stirring convulsions, the dark and dangerous conspiracies, the bold and daring usurpations, the Parricides, and the Regicides of their national annals.

That Mr. Colman's scruples arose from no ill-will to the writer, but were the offspring of an honest timidity, an over-zealous fear, I do not for a moment question. A Licensor must needs be somewhat of an alarmist in virtue of his office. But he who apprehends danger to the Monarchy from the representation of this Play, because it embodies the trial and condemnation of Charles the First, will do well to suppress, if he can, the striking narrative of Hume. In the present universal diffusion of literature and general knowledge, the Stage has lost much of its ancient influence over the feelings and passions of the multitude. That democratic engine, the Press, has

swept away the regal supremacy of the drama. And even if the Theatre were as powerful as in the days of old,—if the tendency of this Play were revolutionary, which I deny,—and if Cromwells were “plenty as blackberries,” which I must be permitted to doubt,—against such a King as William the Fourth, their shafts would fall harmless. The Monarch who has earned, as he has done, the honest love of a whole people, may defy the subtlest attacks of fanaticism and rebellion.

Of the Tragedy, considered as a literary production, I shall say little: that is before the reader, and must speak for itself. No one can be more conscious than I am of its numerous defects, and still more numerous deficiencies; but great as those faults may be, they are not the result of negligence or carelessness. It would be the worst of all pedantries, female pedantry, were I to enumerate the very many contemporary writers, the Histories, Memoirs, Narratives, and State Papers, the Roundhead Sermons and Cavalier Ballads; from which I have endeavoured to gather not merely an accurate outline of this great event, but those minute and apparently trifling touches which might serve to realize the scene, and supply, by a vivid impression of the people and the time, the usual sources of dramatic attraction, the interest of story and suspense, from which I was cut off by the nature of my subject.

Many of these allusions, those for instance to the

papers concealed in the stuffing of the saddle,—to the sowing of the melon seeds,—to Charles's constant perusal of Shakespeare whilst in prison, so prettily recorded by Milton, and to the falling of the head of the King's staff in the trial scene,—are mentioned by the best writers, and will be immediately recognized by all who are any ways conversant with the histories of the time.

The anecdote of Lord Broghill (afterwards Earl of Orrery), which really happened at a subsequent period, is less generally known. He was in London on a mission from Charles the Second during the early part of the Protectorate; when Cromwell discovered, confronted, converted, and employed him much in the manner that I have related.

The materials of the scene of signing the warrant, in which I believe that I have given, from the marking of Marten's cheek to the guiding of Ingoldsby's hand, a very faithful version of what actually occurred, are chiefly taken from the Defences in the Trials of the Regicides. It is certain that the Judges, after the condemnation, were panic-struck at their own act; and that but for an extraordinary exertion of his singular power over the minds of all with whom he came in contact, Cromwell would never have succeeded in obtaining the signatures of the Commissioners of the High Court of Justice to an instrument essential to the completion of this great

national crime, and to the purposes of his own ambition.

I am not aware of having in any material point departed from the truth of History, except in shortening the trial, in bringing the Queen to England, and in assigning to Henrietta the interruption of the sentence, which was actually occasioned by Lady Fairfax; deviations, which were vitally necessary to the effect of the drama. I have some doubts also whether Cromwell did really get rid of Fairfax by dismissing him and Harrison to "seek the Lord together." Hume tells the story confidently; but Hume, although the most delightful, is by no means the most accurate of historians; and the manner in which we are, by the casual mention of cotemporary writers, as well as by the evidence on the different trials, enabled to account for almost every instant of Cromwell's time during that eventful morning, goes far in my mind to disprove the circumstance. But the incident is highly dramatic, and so strictly in keeping with the characters of all parties, that I have no scruple in assuming it as a fact. The thing might have happened, if it did not, and that is excuse enough for the dramatist, although not for the historian.

One word more, and I have done. In attempting to delineate the characters of Charles and Cromwell, especially Cromwell, on the success or failure of

which the Play must stand or fall, I have to entreat the reader to bear in mind—or I shall seem unjust to the memory of a great man—that the point of time which this Tragedy embraces, was precisely that in which the King appeared to the most advantage, “for nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it,” and the future Protector to the least. Never throughout his splendid history were the chequered motives and impulses of Cromwell so decidedly evil, never was he so fierce, so cruel, so crafty, so deceitful, so borne along by a low personal ambition, a mere lust of rule, as at that moment. I have endeavoured in the concluding soliloquy to depict the manner in which I believe him to have lulled and quieted his own conscience: but if I had undertaken to pourtray these remarkable men at any other part of their career, it is certain that my drawing of Charles would have been much less amiable, and that of Cromwell much more so.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>Charles I., King of England</i>	Mr. Abbot.
<i>Duke of Gloucester, his Son, a boy of seven years old</i>	} Master Norman.
<i>Lord Fairfax, General of the Parliamentary Army</i>	
<i>Lord Salisbury</i>	} Mr. Selby.
<i>Lord Say</i>	
<i>Sir Harry Vane</i>	
<i>Lord President</i>	} Mr. T. Lee.
<i>Bradshaw</i>	
<i>Oliver Cromwell</i>	
<i>Ireton</i>	} Mr. Mildenhall.
<i>Harrison</i>	
<i>Downes</i>	
<i>Marten</i>	} Mr. Debar.
<i>Tichburne</i>	
<i>Cook, Solicitor to the Commons</i>	Mr. Green.
<i>Pride, an Officer in the Parliamentary Army</i>	} Mr. Cathcart.
<i>Hacker, Colonel of the Guard</i>	
<i>Sir Thomas Herbert, a Gentleman attending on the King</i>	
<i>Hammond, Governor of the Isle of Wight</i>	
<i>Sentinel</i>	
<i>Servant, belonging to Cromwell</i>	Mr. J. Webster.
	Mr. Doyne.
	Mr. Bender.
	Mr. Forrester.
	Mr. G. Williams.
	Mr. Chalk.
	Mr. Addison.
	Mr. Thomas.
	Mr. Doyne.
	Mr. Fleming.
	Mr. Chippendale.
	Mr. Kerridge.

Bishop, Commissioners, Judges, Officers, Soldiers, &c.

<i>Henrietta Maria, Queen of England</i>	Mrs. Fisher.
<i>Princess Elizabeth, a girl of twelve</i>	Miss Josephine.
<i>Lady Fairfax</i>	Miss Somerville.

The Scene is in London, except during the latter part of the First Act, when it is laid in the Isle of Wight.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN AND SPOKEN BY MR. SERLE.

THE world's historic glories and the fate
Of kings, and, loftier far, the stern debate
Of passions ; greater still, the ocean tide
Of thoughts and principles ; events that ride
Upon that mighty flood ; lights of the past
That dial-shadows on the future cast ;
These Tragedy, wise, solemn, stern, pourtrays
In the Greek verse sublime, in Shakespeare's native lays.
Oh, English Harry ! did the battle-field
Of Agincourt so proud a trophy yield
As the high heart, the generous thought which he
Hath shrin'd thee in for all eternity ?

Man and the truth are our proud Muse's theme :
No witchcraft vision, no light fairy dream
Calls up the spirit of Charles, and bids it pass
As a dim shadow o'er the magic glass ;
Even as he was he is, sealing with blood
The right divine of kings ; she, whom he wooed

In his few hours of joy and mirth, is here,
And weeps their sufferings in no fancied tear ;
A thing whose beauty is fragility,
Wrestling with iron-handed destiny :
And, as though Destiny himself, exprest
In some dark human form, had come to wrest
Sceptres and powers and love and lives from men,
Here, all-controlling, Cromwell stands again.

And can these mighty scenes with trembling hand
Be painted ? or in colours such as stand
One moment in the rainbow, soft and fair ?
Can curious words these awful themes declare ?
No : firm the hand and bold must be the pen
That wields the passions of those fearful men
Whose bold hypocrisy dar'd Heaven and Hell :
Even as they spoke, their speech the Muse shall tell ;
Poor pigmy fear this story must disgrace,
The Titan warrings of a giant race.

CHARLES THE FIRST.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in Whitehall.

*Enter IRETON, HARRISON, and PRIDE, to DOWNES and
MARTEN.*

DOW. Welcome to London, Ireton! dearly welcome
To fair Whitehall! Harrison! Pride! Where loiters
The valiant General?

IRE. He alighted with us
Three hours ago.

MAB. What, three hours here, and still
In harness! Know ye not your coat of mail
Is out of date? Go, doff your armour quick,
Provide ye civil suits, grave civil suits,
Sad reverend civil suits.

PRIDE. What mean'st thou?

DOW. Seek
Meaning of Harry Marten! Tush! Where tarries

The pious Cromwell ?

IRE. He is busied still

Disposing the tired soldiery.

MAR. Disbanding

Will be his business soon. The lubbard people,
And the smug citizens, are grown aweary
Of this rough war. Ye must learn gentler trades
If ye would thrive. Peace is the cry, my masters ;
Peace and the King !

Dow. The Newport treaty speeds ;
So far is sure.

HAR. But we bring victory
To the good cause. Cromwell hath passed careering
From hold to hold, sweeping as with a besom
The foul malignants from the land. The North
Is ours from sea to sea.

Dow. 'Tis a brave leader ;
But peace is ever the best victory.

Enter CROMWELL.

MAR. In good time comes the General. Valiant Crom-
well,

Thy praise was on our lips.

CROM. Not mine ! not mine !

Praise to the Lord of Hosts, whose mighty shield
Bucklered us in the battle, whose right arm
Strengthened us when we smote ! Praise to the Lord !
For His poor instruments, the meanest soldier
Doth His great duty ; we no more. My masters,
Have ye no news astir ? News, the prime staple
Of yonder tattling city ?

MAR. Ay ; the worst

Is that the Commons grow from day to day
More doubtful of the army, more possessed

By canting presbyters.

IRE. Name not the Commons,
A jealous crew, whose envious hate descends
'Twixt every pause of fear on us their loathed,
Despised defenders. Were there but one head
To the whole army, they would turn to truth
An elder tyrant's wish, and chop it off.
Despots who prate of liberty!—

HAB. Worse, worse!
A godless yet intolerant crew, who rear
O'er the down-fallen Church that blacker idol,
A conscience-fettering Presbytery.

CROM. Sir,
They shall be quelled. Power, howsoever called,
Is still the subtlest snare the Tempter weaves
For man's frail, sinful soul. Save me from power!
Grant me to follow still, a lowly soldier
In the great cause! The Commons shall be quelled.
What other news?

Dow. The best is that the King
And the Commissioners draw near a godly
And salutary peace. The King hath bent
His will in a wise humbleness; and now—

CROM. I joy to hear thee say so. What! the Lord
Hath turned his heart, and he hath yielded up
His haughty prelates, his ill councillors,
The popish mummerly of his chapel?

Dow. Nay,
Not yet; but he hath promised.

CROM. Promised! Oh,
The King hath promised!

MAR. Well?

CROM. And ye believe?

Dow. Wouldst have us doubters?

CROM. In good sooth, not I !
Believe who can ! yet ere ye set him free
Look to the stuffing of his saddle, search
The waste leaves of his prayer-book, lest ye find
Some vow to Henrietta, some shrewd protest,
Some antedated scroll to throw the shadow
Of a plain lie before his words. Search ! search !
It is a prudent King, that casts about him
To rid him of his enemies. Search, I say.

Dow. Why, Cromwell, thou art bitter.

CROM. Heaven forefend !

I liked Charles Stuart well. I am of the fools
Whom Habit counts amidst her slaves ; that love,
For old acquaintance sake, each long-known pest
And close familiar evil. I liked him well ;
The better that his proud disgracious speech
Seemed to my plain and downright simpleness
As honest as mine own. Ye all remember
What friends we were at Holmby. Harrison
And e'en my loving kinsman deemed I waxed
Faint in the cause. But rightly it is written
In the one Holy Book, Put not thy trust
In Princes.

IRE. Yet is he in Carisbrooke
A present danger. Round yon prison isle
Lurk spies and plots and treasons. Every breeze
Comes pregnant with quick rumours ; every ear
Is bent to listen ; every eye is turned
On those grey walls.

CROM. I grant ye. But astir,
Free as the breeze to traverse sea and land,
Creep in our councils, sweep across our camps,
Were the King harmless then ? Yet thou art right ;
He's dangerous in Carisbrooke.

HAR. Dismiss him ;
Send him abroad unkinged ; or drive him forth
As Amaziah.

CROM. (*Aside.*) Ha ! And they slew him !

MAR. What, send him to seek succour in each court,
From papal Rome to savage Muscovy,
Till he shall burst on us in triumph, heading
Europe's great armament ?

IRE. Wert thou a soldier,
And in this cause, thou wouldst cry Welcome, Marten,
To such an armament.

HAR. With His great help.

CROM. Ay, with His help, and in this cause, if union
Dwelt in the land. But this is idle talk.
The King is dangerous ; dangerous on the throne,
Dangerous in prison, dangerous abroad,
At home and everywhere. Yet this is idle.
We must abide the Commons' treaty.

HAR. Wherefore
Lifts not the army the strong hand of power,
Over these stiff-necked rulers ? Put them down.
Tread out the firebrands.

IRE. Rather move the Commons
To bring the King to trial.

CROM. Who said that ?

MAR. 'Twas bravely spoken.

CROM. Who said that ?

DOW. The words
Sounded like treason.

CROM. Sir, had we met here
To compass such intent, the very thought
Had been a treason. But the words fell straight
Midst our unconscious hearts, unprompted, quick,
Startling even him who spake them,—like the fire

That lit the Burning Bush. A sign from Heaven!
Direct from Heaven! A comfortable light
To our benighted spirits! As I wrestled
In prayer this morning, when I would have cried
For mercy on Charles Stuart, my parched tongue
Clave to my mouth. A token from on high!
A star lit up to guide us!

MAR. Yet the Commons
Will scarcely echo this rapt strain. The King
Hath friends amongst us.

HAR. Fear not. He who sent
This impulse on His servants will know how
To turn all hearts.

DOW. Ye will not slay the King?

CROM. Life hangs not on our lips; yet surely, Sir,
I hope to spare him. Friends, we must not sleep
Over such stirring business. Downes, go thou
For Bradshaw, that resolved and learned and wise
And godly law-man. Thou art like to find him
At the Guildhall. Say we would speak with him.

[*Exit* DOWNES.]

Harrison!—Downes went forth as one who loves not
His errand—Lacks he zeal? 'Tis a brave soldier,
And yet—Follow him, Marten; and return
With Bradshaw hither. We shall need thy counsel.
Delay not.—

[*Exit* MARTEN.]

Harrison! thou truest soldier
Of the good cause, to thee we trust the charge
Of guarding our great prisoner. Make thee ready
For a swift journey. I'll confer with thee
Alone afore thou goest.

HAR. Should I not see
The General?

CROM. Wherefore ? Hence.

[*Exit HARRISON.*]

[*To PRIDE.*] Nay, Colonel, go not !
I'd speak with thee, good Colonel. Rest thee, son,
I'd speak with this good Colonel.

PRI. I attend

Your Excellency's pleasure.

[*During the next few Speeches CROMWELL walks up and down the Stage, now speaking to himself, now looking at the Weather, now asking questions, without attending to the answers, evidently absorbed in thought.*]

CROM. Ay, the light
Mercurial Harry Marten said but sooth ;
They are unripe for this great charge. It shall be—
And yet—What is the hour ?

PRI. Upon the stroke
Of one.

IRE. He listens not. Look how he searches
The weather with unseeing eyes.

CROM. 'Tis stormy.

PRI. Nay a bright day.

IRE. He hears not.

CROM. Sweep them off,
And the whole game is ours ! But—Which way blows
The wind ?

PRI. Right from the south.

CROM. It must be, shall be.

Ireton, I gave thee yesterday a scroll
Of the malignants in the Commons—Hark ye !
The Commons, our great masters ! If Charles Stuart
Have friends in England, he will find them there
'Mid those self-seekers.

PRI. Wherefore not arraign
The King before the Council ?

CROM. Sir, we need
The Commons' name. I would not that our just
And righteous cause lacked any form of law
To startle tender consciences. I have thought
Afore of this. Didst ever see the thrasher
Winnow the chaff from the full grain? Good Colonel,
Thyself shalt play the husbandman to cleanse
This sample of foul corn. Take yonder scroll,
And with a troop of horse, go post thyself
Beside the Commons' door, and seize each man
Whose name stains that white parchment. Treat all well,
But let none enter.

PRI. And my warrant?

CROM. Sir,

My word. If any question, say the General—

PRI. Lord Fairfax?

CROM. Ay, the good Lord General
Shall hear of thy good service. Fear it not.
Myself shall tell him. Thy good service, dearer
Than half a dozen battles; better worth
And richlier guerdoned. Haste! Lord Grey of Groby
Will aid thee to detect the knaves. Away!
Full many a goodly manor shall change masters
To-morrow 'fore the sequestrators.

[Exit PRIDE.]

IRE. So!

That work will be well done.

CROM. I loathe myself

That I employ the mercenary tool;
But we are in our great aims justified,
Our high and holy purpose. Saints and prophets
Have used uncleanly instruments. Good son,
Keep between Fairfax and these men. The weak
Wife-ridden faintling would demur and dally,

And pause at every step, and then draw back,
Unapt for good or ill. He must know nought.

Re-enter HARRISON and PRIDE.

What make ye here again ?

PRI. Dost thou not hear ?

A mutiny amongst the soldiers.

HAB. Nay,

But half a score malignants, who would fain
Stir up the soldiery.

CROM. And they ?

HAB. They listen,

But move not.

CROM. Seize the traitors. Shoot them dead ;
If any murmur, still them too. Let death
Follow offence as closely as the sound
Of the harquebuss the flash. Art thou not gone ?
What stops thee ?

HAB. Be more merciful

CROM. Why this

Is mercy. If thou saw'st one, match in hand
Approach a mine hollowed beneath some rich
And populous town, wouldst strike him down at once,
Or wait till he had fired the train ?

HAB. At once !

At once !

CROM. Well ?—Go thou too, fair son ! away !
I'll follow on the instant. Look I find
The guilty quiet.

[Exeunt HARRISON and IRETON.]

We have been too easy
And fostered malcontents. Yet this swift vengeance
Will strike a wholesome terror, and the echo
May reach to higher miscreants. Good Colonel,

Thou loiterest overlong, Go, block the door
And let none pass. Be sure thou let none pass.
I must to yon poor traitors. Let none pass.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment in Carisbrooke Castle.

The KING and HERBERT.

KING. Herbert !

HERB. My liege.

KING. Put up my book. I wait
The grave Commissioners, and to be seen
Poring o'er Shakespeare's page—Oh, heinous sin !
Inexpiable deadly sin !

HERB. Your Grace
Speaks cheerily.

KING. Why I have fed my thoughts
On the sweet woodland tale, the lovely tale
Of Arden Forest, till the peaceful end,
The gentle comfortable end, hath bathed
My very heart in sunshine. We are here
Banished as the old Duke, and friends come round,
And foes relent, and calm Forgiveness hangs,
An Angel, in the air, to drop her balm
On all our wounds. I thank thee, royal spirit,
Thrice princely poet, from whose lightest scene
Kings may draw comfort. Take yon sprig of bay
And lay between the leaves. I marvel much
Where loiter the Commissioners.

HERB. Your Grace
Hath vanquished them so often that they creep
Fearfully to the field—a beaten foe.

KING. Nay, we are near agreed. I have granted more
Than they durst hope for. They set forth to-day
Bearing my answer to the Commons. Look
To see a sudden peace. Many will deem
I have yielded overmuch; but I keep quick
The roots of kingly power, albeit the boughs
Be shrewdly lopt. And then to see again
My wife, my children, to reward my poor
And faithful servants, to walk free, to reign!
Look to see sudden peace.

HERB. Heaven speed the day!
Yet, Sire—forgive my fear!—would thou hadst ta'en
The proffered means of safety, had escaped
This island prison!

KING. What! when I had pledged
My word, my royal word! Fie! fie! good Herbert;
Better, if danger were, a thousand-fold
Perish even here than forfeit that great bond
Of honour, a King's word. Fie! fie! Yet sooth
Thou mean'st me kindly, Herbert. Ha! the sea,
That day and night hath chafed so angrily,
Breaking around us with so wild a coil,
An elemental warder, smiles again,
Merrily dancing in the cold keen light
Of the bright wintry Sun. We shall have boats
From England.

HERB. One hath landed, Sire.

KING. And they
May bear my message without pause. Who comes?

Enter HAMMOND.

HAM. May't please you, Sire, the high Commissioners
Crave audience of your Majesty.

KING. Admit them.

VOL. I.

N

*Enter LORD SALISBURY, LORD SAY, SIR HARRY VANE, and
other Commissioners, some of them Ministers.*

See, Vane hath lost his frown ! We shall have peace.
Good-morrow, my good Lord of Salisbury !
Lord Say, Sir Harry Vane, and gentles all,
A fair good-morrow. The sun smiles at last
Upon our meeting.

SAY. Sunshine after storm ;
A happy omen, Sire, a type of peace.

SALIS. Yet clouds are gathering.

SAY. Tush ! the noon-day sun
Will overcome them.

VANE. Cease this heathenish talk
Of omens. Hath your Grace prepared your answer
To the proposals of the Commons ?

KING. Reach
Yon paper, Herbert. Set ye forth to-day ?

VANE. With the next tide.

KING. So speed ye wind and wave,
And send ye swiftly hence, and swiftlier back
Blest messengers of peace, winged like the dove
That bore the olive token. Take my answer,
A frank compliance with each article
Save twain, save only twain.

SAY. And they—I pray thee
Be wholly gracious, Sire ! Peril not thus
Your country's weal, your freedom, and your crown,
By timeless reservation.

KING. I have yielded
Power and prerogative, and state and wealth,
For my dear country. All that was mine own,
All that was mine to give, I freely gave ;
That I withhold is of the conscience. Look

On these white hairs, and think if one so signed,
Marked for the grave, may for the vain respect
Of crowns or kingdoms offer up his friends
Or his old worship. Mark me : I'll not yield
A man of that devoted seven, nor bate
A word of my accustomed prayer, to save
My limbs from cankering fetters, or win back
That velvet prison, a throne. No more of this.
Bear ye the treaty, Sirs ; and use but half
That goodly gift of eloquence for me
That ye to me have shown, and be but heard
With half the grace, and we shall meet full soon
Subject and King, in peace, in blessed peace.—

[HARRISON *heard without.*

Whoso asks entrance with so wild a din ?
Give him admittance quickly.

VANE. Yet, my liege,
For these seven cavaliers—

KING. No more ! no more !
Thou hast my answer.—By the iron tread
A soldier.

Enter HARRISON.

SALIS. Harrison ! What brings thee hither ?

HAB. A sad and solemn message to your prisoner.

KING. Speak out thy tidings. Speak thine errand, Sir.
I am strong-hearted—Sovran privilege
Of them that tower so high !—Strong as yon eagle
That nests among the cliffs. I have borne loads
That would have sunk a meaner man in gulphs
Of deep despair. Thine errand. Stop ! Who sent thee ?

HAB. The Commons.

KING. Now thine errand.

HAB. To demand

The body of Charles Stuart, sometime King
Of England—

KING. Sometime King?

HAR. Whom I attach

Of treason.

KING. Treason and the King! Off, Sir!

I warn thee touch me not. Some natures feel
A shuddering loathing at cold-blooded worms,
Snakes, aspics, vipers, toads—my flesh doth creep
And shiver if the reptile man approach
Too closely. Show thy warrant.

HAR. Look you, Sir,
The warrant be obeyed.

VANE. Dost thou not see

(To SALISBURY.) The master hand of Cromwell in this deed?

(To HARRISON.) Where is the General?

HAR. Come victorious home—
Know'st thou not that?—to lend his pious aid
To our great work.

SALIS. But thou art from the Commons,
Not from the Council—sure thou saidst the Commons?
And they were earnest for the treaty.

HAR. Ay,
But in that goodly field grew tares, rank tares,
Which have been weeded out: stiff presbyters,
Bitter malignants, and those sons of wrath
Who falter in the better path—dead boughs
Upon a noble tree. Some fifty horse
Swept off the rubbish.

SAY. But the men are safe?

HAR. Even as thyself.—Now, Sir, hast thou enough
Studied yon parchment?

KING. Treason! to arraign
A crowned King of treason! I am here

Treating with these same Commons on the faith,
The general faith of nations. I appeal
To ye, my foes ; to thee, my gaoler. What !
Stand ye all mute ? high lords and learned lawmen,
And reverend ministers ? Ye had glib tongues
For subtle argument, and treasonous craft,
And cobweb sophistry. Have ye no word
For faith, for honour ? not one word ? Shame ! shame !

VANE. We are the Commons' servants, and must needs
Obey their mandates.

SAY. Yet with grief of heart—

HAR. Silence !

KING. Ay, silence ! Sir, I thank thee yet
That sparest me that sharpest injury
A traitor's pity. For that gentle deed
I yield me gently to thy hands. Lead on
Where'er thou wilt ; I follow.

HAR. Straight to London.
To bide thy trial.

KING. What ! will they dare that ?
Doth not the very thought, the very word
Appal the rebels ? Trial ! When we meet
Confronted in that regal Hall, the King
And his revolted subjects, whoso then
Shall be the Judge ? The King. Whoso make inquest,
Whoso condemn, and whoso fling a pardon,
A scornful pardon on your heads ? The King,
The King, I tell ye, Sirs. Come on ! I pant
To meet these Judges. For ye, solemn mockers,
Grave men of peace, deceivers or deceived,
Sincere or false boots little, fare ye well !
Yet give me yon vain treaty—Now, by Heaven
I shame to have communed with ye !—This slight paper,

That shivers at a touch, is tough and firm
Mated with such as ye. Bear to the Commons,
Your masters, yon torn fragments, fitting type
Of their divided factions!—fitting type
Of ye, men of a broken faith! Farewell!
I wait thy pleasure, Sir.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Painted Chamber. A Table at which are seated Commissioners, Lawyers, &c.; a Gothic Window behind the Table, through which objects that pass may be seen.

BRADSHAW, FAIRFAX, IRETON, DOWNES, COOK, MARTEN,
TICHEBURNE, &c. FAIRFAX comes forward, followed by BRAD-
SHAW, IRETON, and DOWNES.

FAIR. Soon as the day be fixed, apprise me, Sirs;
The halberdiers shall wait ye.

BRAD. Good my lord,
Thou wilt not leave us? When did Fairfax fly
A post of danger? and his honoured name
Stands foremost in our roll.

FAIR. Sir, I am sworn
The soldier of the Commons, and as soldier
Obey them loyally. All that ye need
For state or for defence in this sad pageant
Our camp shall furnish. Save their General,
You may command the army. For this trial
I like it not. I am no gownsman. Sirs,

The halberdiers shall wait ye.

[*Exit* FAIRFAX.]

MAR. What a nice
And peevish conscience Fairfax bears ! Will send
Arms, horses, men, to escort the prisoner, line
The Court, defend the judges, guard the scaffold—
If so our wisdom wills—yet hold himself
Content and harmless, so his single voice
Swell not the general doom.

DOW. Yet 'tis a wise
And noble gentleman.

BRAD. Tush ! a good sword-blade,
Keen in the field, but at the council dull
And heavy as the scabbard.

Enter CROMWELL.

Lo ! where comes
One whose bright spirit knows no dimness. Cromwell !

CROM. Hear ye the news, my masters ? Harrison,
That bold and zealous soldier of our Israel,
Is here.

BRAD. Where is the King ?

CROM. The King of Kings
Delivers him unto us. Harrison
Awaits his landing. We must be prepared
For instant trial. Glad am I and proud
To greet with looks so firm and resolute
This full and frequent council.

BRAD. Yet you met
A great one who forsakes us.

CROM. The Lord General ?
Why on the battle-day such loss might cause
An hour's perplexity. Now—Hark ye, Sirs !
Passing awhile Lord Fairfax' door I saw

The Queen.

IRE. In England! Didst thou see her face?

CROM. No. But I knew her by the wanton curls,
The mincing delicate step of pride, the gait
Erect and lofty. 'Twas herself, I say,
Vain Jezabel!

DOW. At Fairfax' gate! Alas!

Poor lady!

CROM. (*Aside.*) Ha! And must we watch thee too?
No word of this, good Sirs.

[*Going to the table.*

Why, Master Cook,

What needs this long indictment? Seems to me
Thou dost mistake our cause. The crime is not
A trivial larceny, where some poor thief
Is fenced and hemmed in by a form of words
In tedious repetition, endless links
Of the strong chain of law, lest at some loophole
The paltry wretch escape. We try a King,
In the stern name of Justice. Fling aside
These cumbering subtleties, this maze of words,
And in brief homely phrase, such as the soldier
May con over his watchfire, or the milk-maid
Wonderingly murmur as she tends her kine,
Or the young boy trace in his first huge scroll,
Or younger girl sew in her sampler, say
That we arraign Charles Stuart, King of England,
For warring on his people. Let this deed
Be clear and open as beseems the men
On whom the Lord hath set His seal. Besides
That will let loose thy stream of eloquence
Ice-bound by this cold freezing plea. What says
Our learned President?

BRAD. Thou art right. Thou art right,

Our fair intent needs not a veil. Be sure
He shall have noble trial and speedy, such
As may beseem a King.

DOW. What is his bearing?

CROM. Resolved and confident. Lately at Windsor,
Eating a Spanish melon of choice flavour,
He bade his servant Herbert send the seeds
To be sowed straight at Hampton.

MAR. Many men
Plant acorns for their successors; this King sets
A gourd.

CROM. The Prophet's gourd. We are all mortal.
Sow but a grain of mustard, the green thing
Which soonest springs from death to life, and thou
Shalt wither ere the leaflets shoot.

IRE. The King
Deems that ye dare not try him.

BRAD. Dare not! Cromwell
How soon dost think—

CROM. Was't not the plash of oars?

BRAD. Cromwell!

IRE. He hears thee not. His sense rejects
All sound save that for which with such intense
And passionate zeal he listens. See his cheek
Quivers with expectation. Its old hue
Of ruddy brown is gone.

CROM. Hark! Hark! my masters!
He is come! He is come! We are about to do
A deed which shall draw on us questioning eyes
From the astonied nations. Men shall gaze
Afeared and wondering on this spot of earth,
As on a comet in the Heavens, fatal
To kings of old. Start ye? Why at the first
I started, as a man who in a dream

Sees indistinct and terrible grim forms
Of death and danger float before his glazed
And wondering eyes ; but then as one who wakes
The inspiring light fell on me, and I saw
The guiding hand of Providence visibly
Beckoning to the great combat. We are His soldiers
Following the Cloud by day, the Fire by night :—
And shall we not be constant ? We are arrayed
Against the stiff combined embodied spirits
Of prelacy and tyranny :—Shall we not
Be bold ?

[*The KING, HERBERT, HARRISON, &c. pass the window.*

See ! See ! he passes ! So shall pass
The oppressor from the earth. His very shadow
The very traces of his foot are gone,
And the English ground is free, the English air
Free, free !—All praise be to His mighty name !
This is the crowning work.

[*The Scene closes.*

SCENE II.

A Gallery leading to the King's Prison.

The QUEEN, LADY FAIRFAX, a SENTINEL.

LADY F. Another guard ! The pass-word that hath served
us

Through court, and gate, and hall, will fail us here ;
This is the immediate prison of the King.
Say, Royal Madam, had we best accost
Yon sentinel ?

QUEEN. The prison of the King !
And I have lived to hear those words that pierce
My heart like daggers spoken familiarly,

As she would say good day or fare ye well !
The prison of the King ! England hath been
His prison—but this one leads—My Lady Fairfax
Command him to admit us.

LADY F. He draws nigh.

SENT. Fair mistresses how won ye here ? This gallery
Leads to the prisoner's chambers.

LADY F. We would see him.
Admit us.

SENT. Be ye frenetic ? know ye not
That, save the Lords Commissioners, none dare
Approach the prisoner ?

QUEEN. Say the King.

SENT. Who art thou
That speak'st with such command ?

LADY F. Know'st thou not *me* ?
Thy General's wife.

SENT. I am of Cromwell's soldiers,
And own no woman's rule.

QUEEN. Admit us, slave !
I am the Queen, thy Queen, the Queen of England !
Make way.

SENT. Stand back I say.

QUEEN. I am a wife
Seeking her husband in his prison. Soldier,
If thou have a man's heart !

LADY F. Here's money for thee—
Admit her.

SENT. I have fought in twenty fields
A veteran of the cause. Put up your gold.
And, Madam, please you home !

• QUEEN. Here is my home,—
My husband's prison gate. I'll live here, die here,
Here will I watch without as he within,

Till death, the great deliverer comes to free
The captives. This shall be my grave. Charles ! Charles !

LADY F. Peace ! Peace !

QUEEN. I thought I heard him. Charles ! my Charles !
My King ! My husband !

SENT. There are many chambers
Between thee and the King. I pr'ythee hence !

LADY F. Madam, take patience.

QUEEN. Charles ! He must be dead
Already, that he answers not.

Enter CROMWELL.

CROM. What means
This clamorous din of female tongues so near
The prison of the King ? The Lady Fairfax !

QUEEN. Cromwell !

CROM. The Queen !

QUEEN. Cromwell, I hated thee,
Yet open yonder door, and I'll pray for thee
All my life long. Yon churlish sentinel—

CROM. Did but his duty. Lead her to her husband.

QUEEN. Be quick ! Be quick !

CROM. The word is Naseby.

QUEEN. On !

Be quick. Be quick !

[Exeunt QUEEN and SENTINEL.]

CROM. Now, my good Lady Fairfax,
Right well beseemeth Christian charity
To succour them that suffer ; howsoe'er
Midst strict professors it may breed some marvel
That one so famed for rigid sanctity,
The gravest matron of the land, should herd
With yonder woman.

LADY F. With the Queen ?

CROM. A papist ;
A rank idolater ; a mumming masquer ;
A troller of lewd songs ; a wanton dancer ;
A vain upholder of that strength of Satan
The playhouse. They that be so eminent
As thou wilt find maligners ; 'tis the curse
Of our poor fallen nature. Be not seen
Hovering about these walls. I speak in love
Of the Lord General.

LADY F. The Lord General,
And many a godly minister, and I,
Weak woman though I be, mourn that these walls
Should come between the King and people. Peace
Had been a holier bond.

CROM. Peace ! that our General
The good Lord Fairfax, Captain of the guard,
Should tend the popish ladies to their mass ;—
A high promotion ! Peace ! that every dungeon
May swarm with pious ministers ; forget they
Their old oppressions ? Peace ! that the grave matron
The Lady Fairfax may with troubled thoughts
Sit witness of lewd revels ; mock and scorn
Of the light dames of the chamber, and the lordlings
Their gallants ;—popinjays who scoff and jeer
At the staid solemn port, the decent coif,
The modest kerchief. I have heard such jeers
When yon gay Queen hath laughed.

LADY F. Laughed ! Hath she dared !
Vain minion !

CROM. And to see thee with her ! Thou
That shouldst have been a Jael in this land,
A Deborah, a Judith !

LADY F. Nay, we live
Under a milder law. Whate'er their crimes,

Urge not this bloody trial.

CROM. Whoso saith
That the trial shall be bloody? He who reads
All hearts, He only knows how my soul yearns
Toward yonder pair. I seek them now, a friend,
With friendly proffers. As we reach thy coach
I'll tell thee more. Come, Madam!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

The King's Apartments.

The KING and HERBERT.

KING. Herbert!

HER. An' please your Majesty.

KING. Go seek

The General.

HER. Fairfax?

KING. Cromwell! Cromwell! say
The King commands his presence.

[*Exit HERBERT.*]

To fore-run him,
To plunge at once into this stormy sea
Of griefs, to summon my great foe, to front
The obdurate Commons, the fanatic army,
Even the mock Judges, they who dare to reign
Over a King, to breast them all! Then trial,
Or peace! Death or the crown! Rest comes with either
To me and England, comfortable rest,
After my many wanderings.

Enter the QUEEN.

Henrietta!

My wife, my Queen, is't thou? Is't not a dream?

For I have dreamed so, and awakened—Heaven
Shield me from such a waking! Is't a truth?

QUEEN. Do not my tears give answer? Did that vision
Rain drops of joy like these?

KING. To see thee here
Is to be young and free again, again
A bridegroom and a King.

QUEEN. Ever my King!

KING. I have heard nothing like that voice of hope
Since we were parted.

QUEEN. Wherefore dost thou pause?
Why gaze on me so mournfully?

KING. Alas!
Thou art pale, my Henrietta, very pale,
And this dear hand that was so round and fair
Is thin and wan—Oh, very wan!

QUEEN. 'Twas pining
For thee that made it so. Think on the cause,
And thou'lt not mourn its beauty.

KING. And this grief,
Will kill her! Joined to any other man
She might have lived on in her loveliness
For half an age. She's mine, and she will die.
Oh, this is a sad meeting! I have longed
Have prayed to see thee—now—Would thou wast safe
In France again, my dear one!

QUEEN. Say not so.
I bring thee comfort, safety. Holland, France,
Are firmly with thee; save the army, all
This rebel England is thine own; and e'en
Amid the army some the greatest, some
That call themselves thy judges. 'Tis the turn
Of fate; the reflux of the tide.

KING. Forget not

That I am a prisoner, sweet one ; a foredoomed
Discrowned prisoner. As erewhile I passed
Sadly along, a soldier in his mood
Spat on me : none rebuked him ; none cried shame ;
None cleft the coward to the earth.

QUEEN. Oh, traitors !
Oh, sacrilegious rebels ! Let my lips
Wipe off that scorn. My Charles, thou shalt resume
Thy state, shall sit enthroned, a judge, a King,
Even in the solemn Hall, the lofty seat
Of their predestined treason. For thy life
It is assured—Lord Broghill and a band
Of faithful cavaliers—But thou shalt reign.

KING. Dost thou remember Cromwell ? Ere thou
quitted'st
England he was most like the delving worm
Hypocrisy ; that slough is cast, and now
His strong and shining wings soar high in air
As proud ambition. First demand of him
What King shall reign.

QUEEN. He is my trust.

KING. Hast seen him ?

QUEEN. He sent me to thee now.

KING. Ha ! wherefore ? But I've learned to trust in
nought
Save Heaven. Since thou art here, I am content
To live and reign, but all in honour. I'll
Renounce no creed, resign no friend, abandon
No right or liberty of this abused
Misguided people ; no, nor bate one jot
Of the old prerogative, *my* privilege,
The right divine of kings. Death were to me
As welcome as his pleasant evening rest
To the poor way-worn traveller ;—And yet

I fain would live for thee—Cheer up, fair wife!—
Would live for love and thee. Hast seen thy children?

QUEEN. Not yet. They say Elizabeth, whose face
Even when a little child resembled thine,
To wonder, hath pined after thee, and fed
Her love by thinking on thee, till she hath stolen
Unconsciously thy mien and tone and words
Of patient pensiveness; a dignity
Of youthful sorrow, beautiful and sad.

KING. Poor child! poor child! a woeful heritage!
When I have gazed on the sweet seriousness
Of her young beauty, I have pictured her
In the bright May of life, a Queenly bride,
Standing afore the altar with that look
Regal and calm, and pure as the azure skies
Of Paradise ere tears were born. Now—

Enter CROMWELL.

Cromwell!

CROM. Didst thou desire my presence?

KING. I sent for thee.
To bear my message to thy comrades.

CROM. Sir,
I wait thy pleasure. I would welcome thee
Unto this goodly city—

KING. Doth the gaoler
Welcome his prisoner? I am Charles Stuart,
And thou—Now shame on this rebellious blood!
I thought that I was disciplined and schooled
Into proud patience. Let me not appear
Discourteous—Sir, the King is bounden to thee!
Now hear mine errand,

QUEEN. Tush, hear me!

CROM. The Queen!

QUEEN. Fie! doff this strangeness, when it was thyself
That sent me hither! Cast aside the smooth
Obedient looks which hide thy thoughts. Be plain
And honest, Cromwell.

CROM. I have ever been so.

QUEEN. Open in speech and heart, even as myself.
When I, thy Queen, hold out the hand of peace
And amity, and bid thee say what title
The King shall give to his great General.

CROM. None.

Thou badst me answer plainly.

QUEEN. Yet thou wast
Ambitious once.

CROM. Grant that I were—as well
I trust I had more grace—but say I were so,
Think'st thou not there be homely names which sound
As sweetly in men's ears? which shall outlive
A thousand titles in that book of fame,
History? All praise be to the Lord! I am not
Ambitious.

QUEEN. Choose thine office. Keep the name
Thy sword hath rendered famous. Be Lord Vicar
Be Captain of the Guard; forbid this suit—
Thou canst an' if thou wilt—be Charles's friend
And second man in the kingdom.

CROM. Second! Speak'st thou
These tempting words to me? I nor preside
O'er court or Parliament; I am not, Madam,
Lord General of the army. Seek those great ones.
My place is in the ranks. Wouldst thou make me
The second in the kingdom? Seek those great ones.
The second!

QUEEN. Thou, and well thou know'st it, Cromwell,
Art the main prop of this rebellion! General,

Lord President, what are they but thy tools,
Thy puppets, moved by thy directing will
As chessmen by the skilful player. 'Tis thou
That art the master-spirit of the time,
Idol of people and of army, leader
Of the fanatic Commons, judge, sole judge
Of this unrighteous cause.

CROM. And she would make me
The second man of the kingdom! Thou but troublest
Thyself and me.

QUEEN. Yet hear me but one word.

CROM. No more of bribes!—thou badst me to speak
plainly :

Thou hast been bred in courts and deemest them
Omnipotent o'er all. But I eschew
The Mammon of unrighteousness. I warn ye
Ye shall learn faith in one man's honesty
Before ye die.

QUEEN. Never in thine! At Holmby
We trusted—Fool again—'Twas not in fear ;
I dread thee not. Thou dar'st not try the King.
The very word stands as a double guard,
A triple armour, a bright shield before him ;
A sacred halo plays around the head
Anointed and endiademed, a dim
Mysterious glory. Who may dare to call
For justice on a King? Who dare to touch
The crowned and lofty head?

CROM. Was it at Hardwick,
Or Fotheringay—fie on my dull brain—
That the fair Queen of Scots, the popish woman,
The beautiful, his grandame died?

QUEEN. A Queen,
A vain and envious woman, yet a Queen,

Condemned Queen Mary. Ye are subjects, rebels,
Ye dare not try your King; all else ye may do;
All else ye have done; fought, imprisoned, chased,
Ay, tracked and hunted, like that pious Henry,
The last of the red-rose, whom visiting
Helpless in prison, his arch enemy
The fiendish Richard slew;—even as perchance—

CROM. Shame on thy slanderous tongue! There lies my
sword.

Didst take me for a murderer? Hearken, Madam;
When thou shalt speak again of Henry's death,
Remember 'twas the restless shrew of Anjou
That drove her gentle husband to his end.

KING. Take up the sword; and, wife, I pr'ythee peace!
I yet am King enough to end these brawls.
Take up thy sword! Albeit my breast be bare,
And I unarmed before him, he'll not strike.
That were an honest murder. There be ways
Still and darker; there be men whose craft
Can doom with other tongues, with other hands
Can slay. I know thee, Sir.

CROM. I would not slay
A sinner unprepared.

KING. Go to! I know thee.
Say to the Parliament that I demand
A conference, Lords and Commons.

CROM. Sir, the Commons
Will grant no conference. Thou must address thee
To the High Court of Justice, to thy judges.

KING. Oh, vain and shallow treason! Have ye not
The King's High Court, the judges of the land?
I own no other. Yet if they—

CROM. Expect
Nothing of them but justice. I came to thee,

As to a brother, in pure charity,
In meek and Christian love, when these sharp taunts
Arose betwixt us. Still I fain would save thee.
Resign the crown.

KING. Never.

CROM. Oh, vanity
Of man's proud heart! cling to that sinful toy
A sound, an echo, a dim shadow, weakening
As the true substance flies—cling to that word,
And cast away thy life!

KING. Hold, Henrietta!
What! Dost thou ask me for so poor a boon
As life to change fair honour? I've a son,
A gallant, princely boy—wouldst have me yield
The old ancestral crown, his heritage,
For the small privilege to crawl awhile
On this vile earth, mated with fouler worms
Than they that sleep below? Wouldst have me sell
My kingdom for a little breath?

CROM. Thy kingdom!
Thou hast not a stronghold left.

KING. I have one here.
Thou know'st my answer.

QUEEN. Yet if there be danger—

KING. Peace, dearest, peace! Is the day fixed?

CROM. The day,
The very hour, is set. At noon to-morrow,
Heaven permitting—

KING. The decrees of Heaven
Be oft to man's dark mind inscrutable:
The lightning flame hath fired the straw-thatched roof
Of harmless cottagers, hath rent the spire
Of consecrated temples, hath struck down
Even the dumb, innocent oak that never lied,

Never rebelled, never blasphemed. A veil
Hangs before Heaven's high purpose. Yet when man
Slays man, albeit no King, a reckoning comes,
A deep and awful reckoning. I'll abide
The trial.

CROM. At thy peril.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Westminster Hall fitted up for the KING's Trial. BRADSHAW, seated as President; CROMWELL, IRETON, HARRISON, DOWNES, MARTEN, TICHBURNE, and other Judges on Benches; COOK and other Lawyers, Clerks, &c., at a Table; a Chair of State for the KING on one side; the QUEEN, veiled, and other Ladies in a Gallery behind; the whole Stage filled with Guards, Spectators, &c., &c.

BRAD. Hath every name been called? And every Judge
Appeared at the high summons?

CLERK. Good my Lord,
Each one hath answered.

IRE. [*To CROMWELL.*] The Lord General
Is wanting still.

CROM. The better.

IRE. How?

CROM. Fair son,
We have enow of work—Doth not yon cry
Announce the prisoner?—enow of work
For one brief day without him.—Downes, sit here
Beside me, man.—We lack not waverers;

Men whose long doubts would hold from rosy dawn
To the slow lighting of the evening star
In the clear Heaven of June. Of such as they
One were too many. How say'st thou, good Downes?

DOW. Even as thou say'st.

CROM. Yet 'tis a valiant General,
A godly and a valiant. Ha! the prisoner!

*Enter the KING, attended by HERBERT and other Servants,
HACKER and Guards.*

*[The Soldiers, &c., as the KING walks to his Chair, cry
"Justice! Justice!"*

CRIER. Peace! silence in the court!

BRAD. Ye shall have justice.

My Lords Commissioners, whilst I stood pausing
How fittest to disclose our mighty plea,
Dallying with phrase and form, yon eager cry
Shot like an arrow to the mark, laying bare
The very core of our intent. Sirs, we
Are met to render justice, met to judge
In such a cause as scarce the lucent sun
That smiles upon us from his throne hath seen
Since light was born. We sit to judge a King
Arraigned by his own people; to make inquest
Into the innocent blood which hath been spilled
Like water; into crime and tyranny,
Treason and murder. Look that we be pure,
My brethren! that we cast from out our hearts
All blinding passions: Fear that blinks and trembles
At shadows ere they come; Pride that walks dazzled
In the light of her vain-glory; feeble Pity
Whose sight is quenched in tears; and grim Revenge
Her fierce eyes sealed with gore. Look that we chase

Each frail affection, each fond hidden sin,
Each meaner virtue from our hearts, and cling
To Justice, only Justice. Now for thee,
Charles Stuart, King of England : Thou art here
To render compt of awful crimes—of treason,
Conspiracy, and murder. Answer !

COOK. First,

May it please you, hear the charge ?

KING. Stop ! Who are ye
That dare to question me ?

BRAD. Thy judges.

KING. Say
My subjects. I am a King whom none may judge
On earth. Who sent ye here ?

BRAD. The Commons.

KING. What !

Be there no traitors, no conspirators,
No murderers save Kings, that they dare call
Stern justice down from Heaven ? Sir, I fling back
The charge upon their heads, the guilt, the shame,
The eternal infamy,—on them who sowed
The tares of hate in fields of love ; who armed
Brother 'gainst brother, breaking the sweet peace
Of country innocence, the holy ties
Of nature breaking, making war accurst
As that Egyptian plague, the worst and last,
When the firstborn were slain. I have no answer
For them or ye. I know ye not.

BRAD. Be warned ;
Plead to the accusation.

KING. I will die
A thousand deaths, rather than by my breath
Give life to this new court against the laws
And liberties of England.

BRAD. Sir, we know
Your love of liberty and England. Call
The witnesses. Be they in court?

COOK. They wait
Without.

BRAD. Send for them quickly. Once again,
King, wilt thou plead?

KING. Thou hast my answer—never.

[*A pause of a few moments, during which the Head of the
KING'S Staff, on which he was leaning, falls and rolls
across the stage.*]

MAR. (*To IRETON.*) What fell? The breathless silence of
this vast

And crowded court gives to each common sound
A startling clearness. What hath fallen?

IRE. The head
Of the King's staff. See how it spins and bounds
Along the floor, as hurrying to forsake
The royal wretch its master. Now it stops
At Cromwell's feet—direct at Cromwell's feet.

CROM. The toy is broken.

HAR. What is the device?
Some vain, idolatrous image?

CROM. No, a crown;
A gilded crown—a hollow, glittering crown,
Shaped by some quaint and cunning goldsmith. Look
On what a reed he leans, who props himself
On such a bauble.

DOW. It rolled straight to thee;—
If thou wast superstitious—

CROM. Pass the toy
On to the prisoner! he hath faith in omens—
I—Fling him back his gewgaw!

BRAD. Master Cook,

We wait too long.

COOK. My Lord, the witnesses—

BRAD. Call any man. Within our bleeding land
There lives not one so blest in ignorance
As not to know this treason. None so high
But the storm overtopped him; none so low
But the wind stooped to root him up. Call any man—
The Judge upon the bench, the halberdier
That guards the door.

COOK. Oliver Cromwell!

CROM. Ay?

COOK. No need to swear him. He hath ta'en already
The Judges' oath.

CROM. The Judges' oath, not this.
Omit no form of guardian law, remember
The life of man hangs on our lips.

KING. Smooth traitor!

[CROMWELL is sworn.]

COOK. Lieutenant-General Cromwell, wast thou present
In the great fight of Naseby?

CROM. Was I present!
Why I think ye know that. I was.

COOK. Didst see
The prisoner in the battle?

CROM. Many times.
He led his army, in a better cause
I should have said right gallantly. I saw him
First in the onset, last in the retreat.
That justice let me pay the King.

BRAD. Raised he
His banner 'gainst his people? Didst thou see
The royal standard in the field?

CROM. My Lord
It rose full in the centre of their host

Floating upon the heavy air.

COOK. The arms
Of England?

CROM. Ay, the very lion shield
That waved at Cressi and at Agincourt
Triumphant. None may better know than I,
For it so pleased the Ruler of the Field,
The Almighty King of Battles, that my arm
Struck down the standard-bearer and restored
The English lion to the lion hearts
Of England.

COOK. Please you, Sir, retire. Now summon—

KING. Call not another. What I have done boldly,
In the face of day and of the nation, that,
Nothing repenting, nothing derogating
From the King's high prerogative, as boldly
As freely I avow—to you—to all men.
I own ye not as Judges. Ye have power
As pirates or land robbers o'er the wretch
Entrapped within their den, a power to mock
Your victim with a form of trial, to dress
Plain murder in a mask of law. As Judges
I know ye not.

BRAD. Enough that you confess
The treason—

KING. Stop! Sir, I appeal to them
Whence you derive your power.

BRAD. The people? King,
Thou seest them here in us.

KING. Oh, that my voice
Could reach my loyal people! That the winds
Could waft the echoes of this groined roof
So that each corner of the land might hear,

From the fair Southern valleys to the hills
Of my own native North, from the bleak shores
Of the great ocean to the channeled West,
Their rightful Monarch's cry. Then should ye hear
From the universal nation, town and plain,
Forest and village, the stern awful shout
Of just deliverance, mighty and prolonged,
Deafening the earth and piercing heaven, and smiting
Each guilty conscience with such fear as waits
On the great Judgment-Day. The wish is vain—
Ah! vainer than a dream! I and my people
Are over-mastered. Yet, Sir, I demand
A conference with these masters. Tell the Commons
The King would speak with them.

BRAD. We have no power
To stay the trial.

Dow. Nay, good my Lord, perchance
The King would yield such reasons as might move
The Commons to renew the treaty. Best
Confer with them.

CROM. (*To DOWNES.*) Art mad?

Dow. 'Tis ye are mad
That urge with a remorseless haste this work
Of savage butchery onward. I was mad
That joined ye.

CROM. This is sudden.

Dow. He's our King.

CROM. Our King! Have we not faced him in the field
A thousand times? Our King! Downes, hath the Lord
Forsaken thee? Why I have seen thyself
Hewing through mailed battalia, till thy sword
And thy good arm were dyed in gore, to reach
Yon man. Didst mean to save him? Listen, Sir,

I am thy friend. 'Tis said,—I lend no ear
To slanderers, but this tale was forced upon me—
'Tis said that one whose grave and honoured name
Sorts ill with midnight treachery, was seen
Stealing from the Queen's lodging!—I'm thy friend,
Thy fast friend! We oft see in this bad world
The shadow Envy crawling stealthily
Behind fair Virtue;—I hold all for false
Unless thou prove it true;—I am thy friend!—
But if the sequestrators heard this tale—
Thou hast broad lands. (*Aloud.*) Why do ye pause?

COOK. My high
And honouring task to plead at this great bar
For lawful liberty, for suffering conscience,
For the old guardians of our rights the Commons,
Against the lawless fiend Prerogative,
The persecuting Church, the tyrant King,
Were needless now and vain. The haughty prisoner
Denies your jurisdiction. I call on ye
For instant judgment.

BRAD. Sir, for the last time
I ask thee, wilt thou plead?

KING. Have I not answered?

COOK. Your judgment, good my Lords!

BRAD. All ye who deem
Charles Stuart guilty, rise!

[*The Judges all stand up.*]

KING. What all!

BRAD. Not one
Is wanting. Clerk, record him guilty.

COOK. Now
The sentence!

QUEEN. (*From the Gallery*) Traitors, hold!

CROM. (*To IRETON.*) Heard'st thou a scream?

IRE. 'Tis the malignant wife of Fairfax.

CROM. No !

A greater far than she.

QUEEN. Hold, murderers !

CROM. (*Aloud.*) Lead

Yon railing woman from her seat. My Lord,
Please you proceed.

QUEEN. (*Rushing to the KING.*) Traitors, here is my seat—
I am the Queen ;—here is my place, my state,
My Lord and Sovereign,—here at thy feet.
I claim it with a prouder, humbler heart,
A lowlier duty, a more loyal love,
Than when the false and glittering diadem
Encircled first my brow, a queenly bride.
Put me not from thee ! scorn me not ! I am
Thy wife.

KING. Oh, true and faithful wife ! Yet leave me,
Lest the strong armour of my soul, her patience,
Be melted by thy tears. Oh, go ! go ! go !
This is no place for thee.

QUEEN. Why thou art here !
Who shall divide us ?

IRE. Force her from him, Guards ;
Remove her.

KING. Tremble ye who come so near
As but to touch her garments. Cowards ! Slaves !
Though the King's power be gone, yet the man's strength
Remains unwithered. She's my wife ; my all.

CROM. None thinks to harm the lady. Good my Lord,
The hour wears fast with these slight toys.

QUEEN. I come
To aid ye, not impede. If in this land
To wear the lineal crown, maintain the laws,
Uphold the insulted Church, be crimes, then I.

Am guilty, guiltier than your King. 'Twas I
That urged the war—ye know he loved me;—I
That prompted his bold councils; edged and whetted
His great resolves; spurred his high courage on
Against ye, rebels! I that armed my knight
And sent him forth to battle. Mine the crime;—
Be mine the punishment! Deliver him,
And lead me to the block. Pause ye? My blood
Is royal too. Within my veins the rich
Commingled stream of princely Medici
And regal Bourbon flows: 'twill mount as high,
'Twill stain your axe as red, 'twill feed as full
Your hate of Kings.

CROM. Madam, we wage no war
On women.

QUEEN. I have warred on ye, and now—
Take heed how ye release me! He is gentle,
Patient, and kind; he can forgive. But I
Shall roam a frantic widow through the world,
Counting each day for lost that hath not gained
An enemy to England, a revenger
Of this foul murder.

HAR. Woman, peace! The sentence!

QUEEN. *Your* sentence, bloody judges! As ye deal
With your anointed King, the red right arm
Of Heaven shall avenge him: here on earth
By clinging fear and black remorse, and death,
Unnatural ghastly death, and then the fire,
The eternal fire, where panting murderers gasp
And cannot die, that deepest hell which holds
The regicide.

BRAD. Peace! I have overlong
Forgotten my great office. Hence! or force
Shall rid us of thy frenzy. Know'st thou not

That curses light upon the curser's head,
As surely as the cloud which the sun drains
From the salt sea returns into the wave
In stormy gusts or plashing showers? Remove her.

QUEEN. Oh, mercy! mercy! I'll not curse; I'll be
As gentle as a babe. Ye cannot doom him
Whilst I stand by. Even the hard headsman veils
His victim's eyes before he strikes, afear'd
Lest his heart fail. And could ye, being men
Not fiends, abide a wife's keen agony
Whilst—I'll not leave thee, Charles! I'll never leave thee.

KING. This is the love stronger than life, the love
Of woman. Henrietta, listen. Loose
Thy arms from round my neck; here is no axe;
This is no scaffold. We shall meet anon
Untouched, unharmed; I shall return to thee
Safe, safe,—shall bide with thee. Listen, my dear one,
Thy husband prays, thy King commands thee: Go!
Go! Lead her gently, very gently.

[Exit the QUEEN led.]

Now

I am ready. Speak your doom, and quickly.

BRAD. Death.

Thou art adjudged to die. Sirs, do ye all
Accord in this just sentence?

[The Judges all stand up.]

KING. I am ready.

To a grey head, aching with royal cares,
The block is a kind pillow. Yet once more—

BRAD. Silence. The sentence is pronounced; the time
Is past. Conduct him from the Court.

KING. Not hear me!

Me, your anointed King! Look ye what justice
A meaner man may hope for.

CROM. Why refuse
His death-speech to a prisoner? Whoso knoweth
What weight hangs on his soul. Speak on and fear not.

KING. Fear! Let the guilty fear. Feel if my pulse
Flutter? Look if my cheek be faded? Hearken
If my calm breathing be not regular,
Even as an infant's who hath dropt asleep
Upon its mother's breast? As I lift up
This Sword, miscalld of Justice, my clear voice
Hoarsens nor falters not. See, I can smile
As thinking on the axe, I draw the bright
Keen edge across my hand. Fear! Would ye ask
What weight is on my soul, I tell ye none,
Save that I yielded once to your decree,
And slew my faithfullest. Oh, Strafford! Strafford!
This is a retribution!

BRAD. Better weep
Thy sins than one just holy act.

KING. For ye
My subject-judges I could weep; for thee
Beloved and lovely country. Thou wilt groan
Under the tyrant Many till some bold
And crafty soldier, one who in the field
Is brave as the roused lion, at the council
Watchful and gentle as the couchant pard,
The lovely spotted pard, what time she stoops
To spring upon her prey; one who puts on,
To win each several soul, his several sin,
A stern fanatic, a smooth hypocrite,
A fierce republican, a coarse buffoon,
Always a great bad man; till he shall come,
And climb the vacant throne, and fix him there,
A more than King. Cromwell, if-such thou know'st
Tell him the rack would prove an easier couch

Than he shall find that throne ; tell him the crown
On an usurper's brow will scorch and burn,
As though the diamonded and ermined round
Were framed of glowing steel.

CROM. Hath His dread wrath
Smitten thee with frenzy ?

KING. Tell him, for thou know'st him,
That Doubt and Discord like fell harpies wait
Around the usurper's board. By night, by day,
Beneath the palace roof, beneath that roof
More fair, the summer sky, fear shall appal
And danger threaten, and all natural loves
Wither and die ; till on his dying bed,
Old 'fore his time, the wretched traitor lies
Heartbroken. Then, for well thou know'st him, Cromwell,
Bid him to think on me, and how I fell
Hewn in my strength and prime, like a proud oak,
The tallest of the forest, that but shivers
His glorious top and dies. Oh ! thou shalt envy,
In thy long agony, my fall, that shakes
A kingdom but not me.

CROM. He is possessed !—
My good Lord President, the day wears on—
Possessed of a fierce devil !

BRAD. Lead him forth.

KING. Why so. Ye are warned. On to my prison, Sirs !
On to my prison !

[*Soldiers, &c., cry, "On to Execution !" "Justice and
Execution !"*]

CROM. Nay, my comrades,
Vex not a sinner's parting hour. The wrath
Is on him, Harrison !

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in CROMWELL's House.

CROMWELL Alone.

CROM. So, my Lord Broghill ! We are shrewdly rid
Of one bold plotter. Now to strike at once,
Ere fresh conspiracies—

Enter IRETON.

What mak'st thou here,
Fair son ?

IRE. The Lords Commissioners refuse
To sign the warrant. He'll escape us yet.

CROM. Refuse ! What all !

IRE. No. Harrison and Bradshaw,
And Marten, still hold firm.

CROM. Too few ! too few !
Ay, he'll escape. They'll treat. What say the traitors ?

IRE. The most keep stubborn silence. Harrison
Is hoarse with railing.

CROM. Overhot ! But that's
A fault may pass for virtue. Overcold's

Your modish sin. Weakness or treachery !
Peters or Judases! They'll treat. They'll treat.
Where lies thy regiment ?

IRE. At Westminster.

One glance of their bright swords, one stirring note
Of their war-trumpet, and these dastard Judges—
I'll seek them instantly.

CROM. Son, thou mistak'st.

Foul shame it were here in a Christian land
To govern by brute force—How many hast thou ?

IRE. A thousand horse.

CROM. Or turn their very guards
Against the Judges—Be they trusty ?

IRE. Sir,

I'll answer for them as myself.

CROM. Nay, go not.

No force, good son ! No force !

Enter a Servant.

What wouldst thou ? Speak.

SERV. The Colonel Harrison sends me to crave
Your Excellency's presence.

CROM. Ay ! I come.

Didst meet thy fellow Robert, and the gallant
Whom thou saw'st here this morning ?

SERV. Sir, they passed me
At speed.

CROM. I come. No force, good son. Remember
This is a Christian land. We must keep pure
The Judgment-seat. No force.

[*Exit* IRETON.]

At speed ! Ere now

They have crost the Thames at Kew. We are quit of one
Bold cavalier.—What said the Colonel ?

SERV. Prayed

Your instant presence, and between his teeth
Muttered "Faint craven souls!"

CROM. Fie! Fie! to speak

Irreverently of such great ones. Faint
And craven souls! Follow my son; thou'lt find him
Heading his valiant horse. Bid him be still
Till I send to him—still as night. And now
For ye wise Judges!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

The Painted Chamber.

BRADSHAW, HARRISON, COOK, DOWNES, TICHBURNE,
MARTEN, and other Judges

HAB. Be ye all smit with palsy? Hang your arms
Dead at your sides, that ye refuse to sign
The warrant? Be ye turned idolaters?
Rank worshippers of Baal? . . .

BRAD. They refuse not.

MAB. They parley, Sir, they dally, they delay.

COOK. The wiser if they did. 'Twere vantage-ground,
The keen axe swinging o'er his head, to treat
With your great prisoner.

HAB. Treat! Was yonder trial
A mummer, a stage-play, a farce? Oh, blind
And stubborn generation!

DOW. The whole people
Are struck with awe and pity. Each man's cheek
Is pale; each woman's eye is wet; each child
Lifts up its little hands as to implore
Mercy for the poor King.

HAB. Captivity

And bondage will o'ertake them! They fall off
Like the revolted Tribes. Egyptian bondage!

Enter CROMWELL.

CROM. Wherefore so loud, good Colonel? Sirs, I shame
To have held ye waiting here. A sudden cause,
I pray ye believe it urgent, hindered me.
Where is the warrant? Have ye left a space
For my poor name?

MAR. Thou wilt find room enow.
There!

CROM. What unsigned?—Harrison!—He came hither
To crave your signatures.

HAB. I did my message!
But these Philistines—

CROM. Do ye shame to set
Your names to your own deeds? Did ye not pass
This solemn sentence in the face of day,
Before the arraigned King, the shouting people,
The majesty of Heaven?

TICH. Thou dost mistake us.

CROM. I crave your pardon, Sirs. I deemed ye were
The Judges, the King's Judges, the elect
Of England, chosen by her godly Commons
As wisest, boldest, best. I did mistake ye.

DOW. Listen, ere thou accuse us.

MAR. Listen! sign!
And we will listen, though your pleaded reason
Outlast Hugh Peters' sermon.

DOW. Hear me first.

CROM. Well!

DOW. We have here Commissioners from Scotland,
Praying our mercy on the King.

CROM. They gave him
Into our hands.

HAB. And they are answered Sir.
Thou know'st that Cromwell singly put them down,
As they had been young babes.

DOW. The Pensionary—

CROM. Pshaw!

DOW. Hath sent pressing missives! Embassies
From every court, are on the seas; and Charles
Proffers great terms.

CROM. Have we not all?

COOK. But he
Will give a fair security, a large
And general amnesty. So are we freed
From fear of after-reckoning.

CROM. Master Cook,
No wonder that a lawyer pleads to-day
Against his cause of yesterday—if feed
To the height. But thou art not of us; thy part
Is o'er.

MAR. He will give large securities!
For what?

DOW. The general safety and our own.

MAR. Safety, say liberty! Securities.
Marry large promises! An ye will trust
Ye may be Earls and Marquises, and portion
This pretty islet England as a manor
Amongst ye. Shame ye not to think a bribe
Might win your souls from freedom?

HAB. From the Lord!
Would ye desert His people? sell for gain
His cause?

CROM. Hush! Hush! none thinketh to forsake
The cause!

TICH. Let Bradshaw sign. What need more names
Than the Lord President's?

BRAD. I am ready, Sirs,
An ye will follow me. The instrument
Were else illegal. When ye are prepared,
Speak.

CROM. My good masters, ye remember me
Of a passage of my boyhood.

[*Then aside to BRADSHAW and HARRISON.*

Deem me not

A light unmeaning trifle, recollect
How Nathan spake to David. [*Then aloud.*] Being a child
Nutting with other imps in the old copse
At Hinchinbroke, we saw across a wide
But shallow stream one overhanging hazel,
Whose lissome stalks were weighed by the rich fruitage
Almost into the water. As we stood
Eyeing the tempting boughs, a shining nut
Fell from its socket, dimpling wide around
The dark clear mirror. At that sight one bold
And hardy urchin, with myself, no less
In those young days a daring wight, at once
Plunged in the sparkling rivulet. It rose
Above our ankles, to our knees, half up
Our thighs, and my scared comrade in the midst
Of the stream turned roaring back, and gained the bank
Nutless and wet, amidst the scoffing shouts
Of the small people.

BRAD. And thou?

CROM. Why I bore

My course right on, and gained the spoil. Sirs, we
Have plunged knee deep in the waters; are midway
The stream. Will ye turn now and leave the fruit
Ungathered, recreants? or hold boldly on

And win the holy prize of freedom? Give me
The warrant. [*Signs.*] So! methinks an it were not
Over ambitious, and that's a sin,
My homely name should stand alone to this
Most righteous scroll. Follow who list. I've left
A space for the Lord President.

BRAD. I'll fill it
With an unworthy name. [*Signs.*]

CROM. Now swell the roll,
My masters! Whither goest thou, Marten? None
Shall stir till he hath signed. Thou a ripe scholar,
Not write thy name! I can write mine i' the dark,
And oft with my sword-point have traced in air
The viewless characters in the long hour
Before the joy of battle. Shut thine eyes,
And write thy name! Anywhere! See—
[*Marking MARTEN's cheek with a pen.*]

Nay, Marten,
Stand still!—See! See! how fair and clerkly! Yet
This parchment is the smother.

MAR. Hold thee sure
I'll pay thee, General.

TICH. Why he hath marked thee
Like a new, ruddled sheep.

MAR. I'll pay thee.

CROM. Sign.

MAR. Willingly; joyfully. [*Signs.*]

CROM. Why so. Where goes
Our zealous alderman? I deemed to see
His name the first.

BRAD. He fears the City's safety,
Full, as he says, of the King's friends.

CROM. He fears!
They be bold men who fearlessly do own

Their fears. I dare not. Fear! Sir, didst thou come
By water hither?

TICH. No.

CROM. And didst thou meet
No soldiers on thy way?

TICH. Many. The streets
Are swarming with them.

CROM. Were they silent?

TICH. No,
They called aloud for execution.

CROM. Say,
For justice and for execution. Marry,
My Ironsides know not the new state trick
To separate the words. Well! are not they
A nearer fear? Sign boldly.

[CROMWELL, MARTEN and DOWNES, *advance to the front.*]

MAR. They flock fast.

CROM. 'Tis time, for plots are weaving all around us,
Like spider's nets in Autumn. But this morning
I swept one web away. Lord Broghill—

MAR. What!
Hath he been here?

DOW. Is he discovered?

CROM. Sir,
I have a slow-hound's scent to track a traitor.
He's found and he's despatched.

DOW. How?

MAR. Where?

CROM. To Ireland,
With a commission 'gainst the rebels. 'Tis
An honest soldier who deserves to fight
For the good cause. He but mistook his side;
The Queen beguiled him, and the knightly sound
Of loyalty. But 'tis an honest soldier.

He will prove faithful.

MAR. How didst win him?

CROM. How?

A word of praise, a thought of fear. How do men
Win traitors? Hark ye, Downes! Lord Broghill left
A list of the King's friends amongst us here;—
Grave seeming Roundheads, bold and zealous soldiers,
High officers—I marvel not ye look
Distrustfully—one of renown, a Colonel,
A Judge too! Downes, hast thou signed yonder Warrant

MAR. What was the plan?

CROM. Go sign I say.—The plan!

A sudden rescue, to o'erpower the guard.—

Ha! Ingoldsby—

[Seizing one of the Judges and leading him to the table.]

Nay, man, if thou be questioned,
Some dozen years hence, say that I forced thee, swear
Thy wicked kinsman held thy hand.—Ay, now
The blank is nobly filled, and bravely! now
I know ye once again, the pious Judges
The elect and godly of the land!

[A trumpet heard without.]

Ha!—Marten,

Haste to my son; bid him disband his force;

The peril is gone by.

[Exit MARTEN.]

HAR. What peril?

CROM. Ye

That are assembled here, should lift your voice
In earnest thanks for quick deliverance
From sudden danger. Ye knew nought of this
Great jeopardy, nor need ye know. Give thanks,
And question not. Ye are safe.

BRAD. Art sure of that?

CROM. Did ye not hear me even now take order
The guard should be dispersed? Question no more,
Ye are so safe, that this slight parchment, Sirs,
May be your shield.

BRAD. The deed is incomplete.
It hath no date.

CROM. Ah! well reminded! write
The Thirtieth.

DOW. To-morrow? that were sudden.

CROM. Why so we must be. There be plots astir,
And speed is our best safety.—Thou hast signed?
Thy name is here amongst us?—I must haste
To overtake the hour. 'Tis still unsealed.
Add thou my signet, Bradshaw.

[Exit CROMWELL.]

TICH. What intends
The General?

BRAD. Question not of that. A taper!
Your seals, my Lords Commissioners! Your seals!

[The scene closes.]

SCENE III.

The KING's Apartments.

*Enter the KING, leading in the PRINCESS ELIZABETH and the
DUKE OF GLOUCESTER.*

KING. Here we may weep at leisure. Yon fierce
ruffian
Will scarce pursue us here. Elizabeth,
I thought I had done with anger, but the soldier
Who gazed on thee awhile, with looks that seemed
To wither thy young beauty, and with words—
My child! my child! And I had not the power

To shield my own sweet child !

ELIZ. I saw him not ;
I heard him not : I could see none but thee ;
Could hear no voice but thine.

KING. When I am gone
Who shall protect thee ?

GLOU. I shall soon be tall ;
And then—

KING. Poor boy ! Elizabeth, be thou
A mother to him. Rear him up in peace
And humbleness. Show him how sweet Content
Can smile on dungeon floors ; how the mewed lark
Sings in his narrow cage. Plant patience, dear ones,
Deep in your hearts.

Enter HERBERT.

Herbert, where stays the Queen ?
Still on that hopeless quest of hope, though friends
Drop from her fast as leaves in Autumn ?

HERB. Sire,
Her Grace is absent still. But General Cromwell
Craves audience of your Majesty.

KING. Admit him.
Wipe off those tears, Elizabeth. Resume
Thy gentle courage. Thou art a Princess.

Enter CROMWELL.

Sir,
Thou seest me with my children. Doth thine errand
Demand their absence ?

CROM. No. I sent them to thee
In Christian charity. Thou hast not fallen
Amongst the heathen.

KING. Howsoever sent,

It was a royal boon. My heart hath ached
With the vain agony of longing love
To look upon those blooming cheeks, to kiss
Those red and innocent lips, to hear the sound
Of those dear voices.

CROM. Sir, 'twas meet they came
That thou might'st see them once again, might'st say—

KING. Farewell!—I can endure the word—a last
Farewell! I have dwelt so long upon the thought,
The sound seems nothing. Ye have signed the sentence?
Fear not to speak, Sir.

CROM. 'Tis a grievous duty—

KING. Ye *have* signed. And the day?

CROM. To-morrow.

KING. What!

So soon? And yet I thank ye. Speed is mercy.
Ye must away, poor children.

CROM. Nay, the children
May bide with thee till nightfall.

KING. Take them, Herbert!
Take them.

CHILDREN. Oh! no, no, no!

KING. Dear ones, I go
On a great journey. Bless ye once again,
My children! We must part. Farewell!

ELIZ. Oh, father,
Let me go with thee!

KING. Know'st thou whither?

ELIZ. Yes;
To heaven. Oh, take me with thee! I must die;
When the tree falls, the young buds wither. Take me
Along with thee to heaven! Let us lie
Both in one grave!

KING. Now bless ye! This is death!

This is the bitterness of love.

CROM. Fair child

Be comforted.

KING. Didst thou not pat her head?

CROM. She minded me, all in her innocent tears,
Of one in mine own dwelling.

KING. Thou hast daughters;
Be kind to her.

CROM. I will.

KING. And the poor boy—
He comes not near the throne. Make not of him
A puppet King.

CROM. I think not of it.

KING. Take them,
Good Herbert! And my wife—

CROM. She shall be safe;
Shall home to France unharmed.

KING. Now fare ye well!—
Cromwell, come back!—No, bring them not again—
No more of parting—bless them! bless them! See
The girl, the poor, poor girl, hath wept away
Her tears, and pants and shivers like a fawn
Dying. Oh! for some gentle face to look on
When she revives, or she will surely die.

CROM. She shall be cared for.

[Exeunt HERBERT and the Children.]

KING. Are they gone? quite gone?
I might have kissed them once again, have charged them
To love each other.—No, 'tis best.

CROM. Thou bad'st me
Remain. What is thy will?

KING. Be kind to them!
Be very kind to them!

CROM. Have I not promised?
Was that what thou wouldst say?

KING. No. But the love,
The o'ermastering love—that was the death-pang. Cromwell,
Thou wilt be kind to them?

CROM. Wouldst have me swear?

KING. Nay, swear not, lest I doubt. I will believe thee.
And for the human pity thou hast shown
The touch of natural ruth, I pray thee take
My thanks.

CROM. I would have saved thee. By this hand,
This sinful hand, I would have saved thee, King,
Hadst thou flung by yon bauble.

KING. There is One
Who reads all hearts, One who pursues all crimes,
From silver-tongued and bland hypocrisy
To treasonous murder. The unspoken thought,
And the loud lie, and the accursing act,
Mount to His throne together. Tempt Him not.
I know thee for the worker of this deed,
And knowing pardon thee:—but tempt not Him!

CROM. Thy blood be on thy head! I would have saved
thee—

Even now the thought stirred in me. Pardon, Lord,
That gazing on the father's agonies,
My heart of flesh waxed faint, and I forgot
Thy glory and Thy cause, the suffering saints,
The tyrant's tyranny, and Thy great word,
Freedom! Thy blood be on thy head.

KING. So be it.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The KING's Bedchamber.

(On account of the length of the Tragedy, this Scene is omitted in representation.)

The KING, starting from his Couch ; HERBERT asleep.

KING. Herbert ! Is't time to rise ? He sleeps. What sounds

Were those that roused me ? Hark again ! The clang
Of hammers ! Yet the watch-light burns ; the day
Is still unborn. This is a work of night,
Of deep funereal darkness. Each loud stroke
Rings like a knell, distinct, discordant, shrill,
Gathering, redoubling, echoing round my head,
Smiting me only with its sound amid
The slumbering city, tolling in mine ear—
A passing bell ! It is the scaffold. Heaven
Grant me to tread it with as calm a heart
As I bear now. His sleep is troubled. Herbert !
'Twere best to wake him. Herbert ! rouse thee, man !

HERB. Did your Grace call ?

KING. Ay ; we should be to-day
Early astir. I've a great business toward,
To exchange the kingly wreath, my crown of thorns,

For an eternal diadem ; to die—
And I would go trim as a bridegroom. Give me
Yon ermined cloak. If the crisp nipping frost
Should cause me shiver, there be tongues would call
The wintry chillness Fear. Herbert, my sleep
Hath been as soft and balmy, as young babes
Inherit from their blessed innocence,
Or hardy peasants win with honest toil.
When I awoke thy slumbers were perturbed,
Unquiet.

HERB. Vexed, my liege, with dreams.

KING. Of what ?

HERB. So please you, Sire, demand not.

KING. Dost thou think

A dream can vex me now ? Speak.

HERB. Thrice I slept,
And thrice I woke, and thrice the self-same vision
Haunted my fancy. Seemed this very room,
This dim and waning taper, this dark couch,
Beneath whose crimson canopy reclined
A form august and stately. The pale ray
Of the watch-light dwelt upon his face, and showed
His paler lineaments, where majesty
And manly beauty, and deep trenching thought,
And Care, the wrinkler, all were blended now
Into one calm and holy pensiveness,
Softened by slumber. I stood gazing on him
With weeping love, as one awake ; when sudden
A thick and palpable darkness fell around,
A blindness, and dull groans and piercing shrieks
A moment echoed ; then they ceased, and light
Burst forth and music—light such as the flood
Of day-spring at the dawning, rosy, sparkling,
An insupportable brightness—and i' th' midst,
Over the couch, a milk-white dove, which soared
Right upward, cleaving with its train of light
The heavens like a star. The couch remained
Vacant.

KING. Oh, that the spirit so may pass!
So rise! Thrice didst thou say?

HERB. Three times the vision
Passed o'er my fancy.

KING. A thrice-blessed omen!
Herbert, my soul is full of serious joy,
Content and peaceful as the Autumn sun,
When, smiling for awhile on the ripe sheaves
And kissing the brown woods, he bids the world
A calm good night. Bear witness that I die
In charity with all men; and take thou,
My kind and faithful servant, follower
Of my evil fortunes, true and tender, take
All that thy master hath to give—his thanks,
His poor but honest thanks. Another King
Shall better pay thee. Weep not. Seek the Bishop;
And if thou meet with that fair constancy,
My mournful Henrietta, strive to turn
Her steps away till—I'm a coward yet,
And fear her, lest she come to plunge my thoughts
In the deep fountain of her sad fond tears,
To win me—Ha! can that impatient foot,
That hurrying hand, which shakes the door—

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN. My Charles!

KING. Haste to the Bishop.

[*Exit HERBERT.*]

QUEEN. Charles!

KING. Already here!

Thou didst fall trembling in my arms, last night,
Dizzy and faint and spent, as the tired martlet,
Midway her voyage, drops panting on the deck,
And slumbers through the tempest. I kissed off
The tears that hung on those fair eyelids, blessing
Thy speechless weariness, thy weeping love
That sobbed itself to rest. Never did mother
Watching her fevered infant pray for sleep

So calm, so deep, so long, as I besought
Of Heaven for thee when half unconscious, yet
Moaning and plaining like a dove, they bore thee
With gentle force away. And thou art here
Already! wakened into sense and life
And the day's agony.

QUEEN. Here! I have been
To Harrison, to Marten, to Lord Fairfax,
To Downes, to Ireton,—even at Bradshaw's feet
I've knelt to-day. Sleep now? shall I e'er sleep
Again!

KING. At Bradshaw's feet! Oh, perfect love
How can I chide thee? Yet I would thou hadst spared
Thyself and me that scorn.

QUEEN. Do hunters scorn
The shrill cries of the lioness, whose cubs
They've snared, although the forest-queen approach
Crouching? Do seamen scorn the forked lightning,
Albeit the storm-cloud weep? They strove to soothe;
They spake of pity; one of hope.

KING. Alas!
All thy life long the torturer hope hath been
Thy master!—Yet if she can steal an hour
From grief—Whom dost thou trust?

QUEEN. Thyself and Heaven
And a relenting woman. Wrap thyself
Close in my cloak—Here! here!—to Lady Fairfax!
She's faithful; she'll conceal thee. Take the cloak;
Waste not a point of time, not whilst the sand
Runs in the glass. Dost fear its shortness? See
How long it is!

On with the cloak. Begone!

KING. And thou?

QUEEN. My post is here.

KING. To perish.

QUEEN. No.

To live to a blest old age with thee in freedom.
Away, my Charles, my King! I shall be safe—

And if I were not, could I live if thou—
Charles, thou wilt madden me. 'Tis the first boon
I ever craved; and now, by our young loves,
By our commingled griefs, a mighty spell,
Our smiling children and this bleeding land,
Go! I conjure thee, go!

KING. I cannot.

QUEEN. King,

Begone! or I will speak such truth—and truth
Is a foul treason in this land—will rain
Such curses on them, as shall force them send me
To the scaffold at thy side. Fly!

KING. Dost thou see

Fierce soldiers crowded round, as if to watch
A garrisoned fort, rather than one unarmed
Defenceless man, and think'st thou I could win
A step unchallenged? Nor though to escape
Were easy as to breathe, the vigilant guard
Smitten with sudden blindness, the unnumbered
And stirring swarms of this vast city locked
In charmed sleep, and darkness over all
Blacker than starless night, spectral and dim
As an eclipse at noontide, though the gates
Opened before me, and my feet were swift
As the antelope's, not then, if it but perilled
A single hair of friend or foe, would I
Pass o'er the threshold. In my cause, too much
Of blood hath fallen. Let mine seal all. I go
To death as to a bridal; thou thyself,
In thy young beauty, wast not welcomer
Than he. Farewell, beloved wife! My chosen!
My dear one! We have loved as peasants love,
Been fond and true as they. Now fare thee well!
I thank thee, and I bless thee. Pray for me,
My Henrietta.

QUEEN. Charles, thou shalt be saved.
Talk not of parting. I'll to Fairfax; he
Gave hope, and hope is life.

KING. Farewell!

QUEEN. That word—

I prythee speak it not—withers me, lives
Like a serpent's hiss within mine ear, shoots through
My veins like poison, twines and coils about me,
Clinging and killing. 'Tis a sound accurst,
A word of death and doom. Why shouldst thou speak it!
Thou shalt be saved; Fairfax shall save thee. Charles,
Give me a ringlet of thy hair—No, no,—
Not now! not now! Thou shalt not die.

KING. Sweet wife,
Say to my children that my last fond thought—

QUEEN. Last! Thou shalt live to tell them of thy
thoughts

Longer than they or I to hear thee. Harken,
Promise thou wilt await me here! Let none—
They will not dare, they shall not. I but waste
The hour. To Fairfax, the good Fairfax! Charles,
Thou shalt not die! [Exit QUEEN.]

KING. Oh, truest, fondest woman!
My matchless wife! The pang is mastered now,
I am Death's conqueror. My faithfullest!
My fairest! My most dear! I ne'er shall see
Those radiant looks again, or hear the sound
Of thy blithe voice, which was a hope, or feel
The thrilling pressure of thy hand, almost
A language, so the ardent spirit burned
And vibrated within thee! I'll to prayer,
And chase away that image! I'll to prayer,
And pray for thee, sweet wife! I'll to my prayers. [Exit.]

(In representation, the Fifth Act begins here.)

SCENE II.

The Banqueting-House at Whitehall, glass folding-doors opening to the Scaffold, which is covered with black. The block, axe, &c. visible; Officers and other persons are busy in the Background, and CROMWELL is also there giving directions.

IRETON, HARRISON, and HACKER meeting; CROMWELL behind.

HAR. Cromwell!—Good morrow, Ireton! Whither goes The General?

IRE. To see that all be ready
For this great deed.

HACK. He hath the eager step,
The dark light in his eye, the upward look,
The flush upon his cheek, that I've marked in him
When marching to the battle.

HAR. Doth he not lead
To-day in a great combat, a most holy
And glorious victory?

CROM. (*At the back of the Stage.*) Has thou ta'en
order,
That soon as the head's off, the Abbey bell
Begin to toll?

OFFICER. I have.

CROM. Look that the axe
Be keen, and the hand steady. Let us have
No butchery. [*Advancing to the front of the Stage.*
If he die not, we must perish—
That were as nothing! but with us will die
The liberty for which the blood of saints
And martyrs hath been spilt, freedom of act,
Of speech, of will, of faith! Better one grey,
Discrowned head should fall, albeit a thought
Before the time, than God's own people groan

In slavery for ever.

HAR. Whoso doubteth
But he shall die?

CROM. 'Tis rumoured, Sirs, amongst
The soldiery, that one of a high place,
Fairfax—But I believe it not. Hast thou
The warrant, Hacker?

HACK. No.

IRE. Since when doth Fairfax
Dare to impugn the sentence of a free
And public court, of England—

HAR. Of the Great
All-Righteous Judge who hath delivered him
Manifestly to us?

HACK. Will he dare oppose
Army and people? He alone!

CROM. Be sure
The good Lord General, howsoe'er some scruple
May trouble him, will play a godly part
In this sad drama.—Ay, I have the warrant!
It is addressed to thee. Thou must receive
The prisoner, and conduct him hither.

HACK. Hath
The hour been yet resolved?

CROM. Not that I hear.

Enter FAIRFAX.

Ha! our great General! Well met, my Lord!
We that are laden with this heavy burthen
Lacked your sustaining aid!

FAIR. Cromwell, I too
Am heavy laden.

CROM. You look ill at ease;
'Tis this chill air, the nourisher of rheums,
The very fog of frost, that turns men's blood
To water.

FAIR. No, the grief is here. Regret,
Almost remorse, and doubt and fear of wrong

Press heavily upon me. Is this death
Lawful?

IRE. His country's sentence, good my Lord,
May be thy warrant.

FAIR. An anointed King!

HAB. A bloody tyrant.

FAIR. Yet a man, whose doom
Lies on our conscience. We might save the King
Even now at the eleventh hour; we two
Hold the nice scales of life and death, and shall not
Fair mercy sway the balance? Dost thou hear me?
Wilt thou not answer? Canst thou doubt our power?

CROM. No. Man hath always power for ill. I know
We might desert our friends, betray our country,
Abandon our great cause, and sell our souls
To Hell. We might do this, and more; might shroud
These devilish sins in holy names, and call them
Loyalty, Honour, Faith, Repentance—cheats
Which the great Tempter loves!

FAIR. Yet hearken, Cromwell!
Bethink thee of thy fame.

CROM. Talk'st thou of fame
To me? I am too mean a man, too lowly,
Too poor in state and name, to need abjure
That princely sin, and for my humbleness
I duly render thanks. Were I as thou—
Beware the lust of fame, Lord General,
Of perishable fame, vain breath of man,
Slight bubble, frailer than the ocean foam
Which from her prow the good ship in her course
Scattereth, and passeth on regardlessly.
Lord General beware!

FAIR. I am Lord General;
And I alone by mine own voice have power
To stay this deed.

CROM. Alone?

FAIR. I'll answer it
Before the Council.

CROM. Ha! alone!—come nearer.

FAIR. What wouldst thou of me?

CROM. Yonder men are firm

And honest in the cause, and brave as steel;
Yet are they zealots, blind and furious zealots!
I would not they should hear us—bloody zealots!

FAIR. Speak, Sir; we waste the hour,

CROM. I would confess

Relentings like thine own.—They hear us not?

FAIR. I joy to hear thee.

CROM. Thou art one elect,

A leader in the land, a chosen vessel,
And yet of such a mild and gracious mood,
That I, stern as I seem, may doff to thee
This smooth and governed mask of polity,
And show the struggling heart perplexed and grieved
In all its nakedness. Yes, I have known
The kindly natural love of man to man
His fellow!—the rough soldier's shuddering hate
Of violent death, save in the battle; lastly,
A passionate yearning for that sweetest power
Born of fair Mercy.

FAIR. Yet but now thou chid'st me,
And with a lofty scorn, for such a weakness.
The change is sudden.

CROM. Good my Lord, I strove
And wrestled with each pitying thought as born
Of earthly pride and mortal sin. Full oft
We, that are watchers of our wretched selves,
Aiming at higher virtues, trample down
Fair shoots of charity and gentle love;
Yet still my breast was troubled. And since thou
Art moved by such relentings—

FAIR. And a promise
Made to my wife.

CROM. A wise and pious lady!

FAIR. Thou wilt then save the King?

CROM. Sir, we must have

Some higher warranty than our wild will,
Our treacherous human will, afore we change
The fiat of a nation. Thou art a man
Elect and godly—Harrison!—go seek
The presence of the Lord. Perhaps to thee
A guiding answer, a divine impulsion,
May be vouchsafed. Go with him, Harrison!
Seek ye the Lord together.

FAIR. 'Tis a wise
And pious counsel.

CROM. Step apart awhile;
We will await ye here.

[*Exeunt FAIRFAX and HARRISON.*]

CROMWELL *gives the Warrant to HACKER.*

Now! now! be quick!

[*Exit HACKER.*]

Is the scaffold all prepared? The headsman waiting
With shrouded visage and bare arm? The axe
Whetted? Be ready on the instant. Where
Be guards to line the room, mute wondering faces,
A living tapestry, and men of place
To witness this great deed? A King should fall
Decked with the pageantries of Death, the clouds
That roll around the setting sun.

IRE. If Fairfax
Return before he come—

CROM. Dost thou mistrust
Harrison's gift in prayer? The General's safe.
Besides I sent erewhile the halberdiers
To guard Charles Stuart hither. Hacker 'll meet
His prisoner.

IRE. But should Fairfax—

CROM. Wherefore waste
A word on such a waverer!

IRE. What hath swayed him?

CROM. His wife! his wife! The Queen hath seen again

That haughty dame, and her fond tears—

IRE. I marvel

That thou endur'st that popish witch of France
So near.

CROM. I watch her. He must die! 'Tis borne
Upon my soul as what shall be. The race,
The name shall perish.

IRE. Ay, the very name
Of King.

CROM. Of Stuart.

IRE. And of King.

CROM. So be it.

Will Bradshaw never come?

Enter BRADSHAW, COOK, MARTEN, and others.

Ah, welcome! welcome!

Ye are late.

BRAD. Yon living mass is hard to pierce
By men of civil calling. The armed soldiers
Can scantily force a passage for their prisoner.

CROM. He comes?

BRAD. He's at the gate.

IRE. What say the people?

BRAD. The most are pale and silent, as a Fear
Hung its dull shadow over them; whilst some,
Struck with a sudden pity, weep and wonder
What ails them; and a few bold tongues are loud
In execration.

IRE. And the soldiers?

MAR. They

Are true to the good cause.

CROM. The righteous cause!

My friends and comrades, ye are come to witness
The mighty consummation. See, the sun
Breaks forth! The Heavens look down upon our work
Smiling! The Lord hath risen!

IRE. The King!

Enter the KING, HACKER, HERBERT, a Bishop, Guards, &c.

KING. Why pause ye?
Come on.

[HERBERT gives the KING a letter.

HERB. Sire, from thy son.

KING. My boy! My boy!
No, no; this letter is of life, and I
And life have shaken hands. My kingly boy!
And the fair girl! I thought to have done with this.
But it so clings! Take back the letter, Herbert.
Take it, I say. Forgive me, faithful Herbert,
That last impatient word. Forgive me. Now, Sirs,
What see ye on that platform? I am as one
Bent on a far and perilous voyage, who seeks
To hear what rocks beset his path. What see ye?

BRAD. Only the black-masked headsman.

KING. Ay, he wears
His mask upon his face, an honest mask.
What see ye more?

BRAD. Nought save the living sea
Of human faces, blent into one mass
Of sentient various life: woman and man,
Childhood and infancy, and youth and age
Commingle, with its multitudinous eyes
Upturned in expectation. Awful gaze!
Who may abide thy power?

KING. I shall look upward.
Why pause we here?

CROM. Ay, why?

BRAD. May it please thee, Sir,
To rest awhile? Bring wine.

KING. I need it not.
Yes! fill the cup! fill high the sparkling cup!
This is a holiday to loyal breasts,
The King's accession day. Fill high! fill high!
The block, the scaffold, the swift sudden axe,
Have yet a privilege beyond the slow

And painful dying bed, and I may quaff
 In my full pride of strength a health to him,
 Whom, pass one short half-hour, the funeral knell
 Proclaims my successor. Health to my son!
 Health to the King of England! Start ye, Sirs,
 To hear the word? Health to King Charles, and peace,
 To this fair realm! And when that blessed time
 Of rightful rule shall come, say that I left
 For the bold traitors that condemned, the cowards
 Who not opposing murdered me (I have won
 So near the Throne of Truth that true words spring
 Unbidden from my lips,) say that I left
 A pardon, liberal as the air, to all,
 A free and royal pardon!—Pr'ythee speed me
 On my rough journey.

CROM. Wherefore crowd ye there?
 Make way.

KING. I thank thee, Sir. My good Lord Bishop,
 Beware the step.—

[*Exeunt KING, HERBERT, Bishops and Guards.*

(*A pause.*)

CROM. Doth he address the people?

MAR. Not so. He kneels.

CROM. 'Twere fittest. Close the door.
 This wintry air is chill, and the Lord President
 Is of a feeble body.

[*Scream without.*

BRAD. Hark!

CROM. 'Tis one
 Who must be stayed.

BRAD. The Queen?

CROM. Go stop her, Ireton,

[*Exit IRETON.*

It were not meet that earthly loves should mingle
 With yonder dying prayer. Yes! Still he kneels;
 Hacker, come hither. If thou see a stir
 Amongst the crowd, send for my horse; they're ready;—
 Or if, 'midst these grave men, some feeble heart

Wax faint in the great cause, as such there be ;—
Or on the scaffold, if he cling to life
Too fondly ;—I'd not send a sinful soul
Before his time to his accompt, good Bradshaw !
But no delay ! Is he still kneeling ?—Mark me
No idle dalliance, Hacker ! I must hence,
Lest Fairfax—no weak dalliance ! no delay !
The cause, the cause, good Bradshaw !
[Exit, and the Scene closes.]

SCENE III.

Another Gallery in Whitehall.

Enter CROMWELL.

CROM. Methought I heard her here.—No !—If she win
To Fairfax !—He must die, as Ahab erst
Or Rehoboam, or as that great heathen
Whom Brutus loved and slew. None ever called
Brutus a murderer ! And Charles had trial—
'Twas more than Cæsar had !—free, open trial,
If he had pleaded. But the Eternal Wrath
Stiffened him in his pride. It was ordained,
And I but an impassive instrument
In the Almighty hand, an arrow chosen
From out the sheaf. If I should reign hereafter
Men shall not call me bloody.—Hark ! the bell !
No—all is hush as midnight.—I shall be
Tenderer of English lives. Have they forgot
To sound the bell ? He must be dead.

QUEEN. (*Without.*) Lord Fairfax !

CROM. The Queen ! the Queen !

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN. They told me he was here—
I see him not,—but I have wept me blind ;—
And then that axe, that keen bright edgy axe,
Which flashed across my eyeballs, blinding me
More than a sea of tears.—Here's one !—Oh fly

If thou be man, and bid the headsman stay
His blow for one short hour, one little hour,
Till I have found Lord Fairfax! Thou shalt have
Gold, mines of gold! Oh, save him! save the King!

CROM. Peace! peace! Have comfort!

QUEEN. Comfort! and he dies,
They murder him; the axe falls on his neck;
The blood comes plashing!—Comfort!

Enter LADY FAIRFAX.

LADY F. Out, alas!

I can hear nought of Fairfax, royal Madam!—
Cromwell, the master-murderer!

QUEEN. Oh, forgive her!

She knows not what she says. If thou be Cromwell,
Thou hast the power to rescue. See I kneel;
I kiss thy feet. Oh, save him! Take the crown;
Take all but his dear life! Oh, save him, save him!
And I will be thy slave!—I, a born Princess,
I, a crowned Queen, will be thy slave.

CROM. Arise!

My Lady Fairfax lead this frantic woman
To where her children bide.

QUEEN. Thou wilt not make
My children fatherless? Oh, mercy! mercy!
I have a girl, a weeping innocent girl,
That never learnt to smile, and she shall be
Thy handmaid; she shall tend thy daughters. I,
That was so proud, offer my fairest child
To be thy bondwoman.

CROM. Raise her! Undo
These clasping hands. I marvel, Lady Fairfax,
Thou canst endure to see a creature kneel
To one create.

LADY F. Out on thee, hypocrite!
Where lags my husband?

QUEEN. Save him, save him, Cromwell!

CROM. Woman, arise! Will this long agony
Endure for ever?

*Enter IRETON on one side, followed by FAIRFAX and
HARRISON on the other.*

Is he dead?

FAIR. What means

This piercing outcry?

QUEEN. Fairfax! He is saved!

He is saved!

[Bell tolls without.]

IRE. The bell! the Abbey bell! Hark!

CROM. There

The will of Heaven spake. The King is dead.

FAIR. Look to the Queen. Cromwell, this bloody work
Is thine.

CROM. This work is mine. For yon sad dame,
She shall away to France. This deed is mine,
And I will answer it. The Commonwealth
Is firmly 'stablished, Ireton. Harrison,
The Saints shall rule in Israel. My Lord General,
The army is thine own, and I a soldier,
A lowly follower in the cause. This deed
Is mine.—

END OF VOL. I.

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